

**BROADENING THE SCOPE: EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF CSCOPE AND  
PRESCRIBED CURRICULUM ON EXPERIENCED ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
ARTS TEACHERS--A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

A Dissertation

by

SUSAN MICHELLE TYRRELL

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2010

Major Subject: Educational Psychology

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Approved by:

Co-Chairs of Committee,	Joyce E. Juntune
	Michael Ash
Committee Members,	Rodney Hill
	Ben Welch
Head of Department,	Victor Willson

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## **ABSTRACT**

Broadening the Scope: Examining the Effects of CSCOPE and Prescribed Curriculum on Experienced English Language Arts Teachers--A Qualitative Study.

(August 2010)

Susan Michelle Tyrrell, B.A., The University of Texas at Tyler;

M.A., Texas A&M University- Commerce

Co-Chairs of Advisory Committee: Dr. Joyce E. Juntune  
Dr. Michael Ash

This study examines the effects of the CSCOPE prescribed curriculum on four English language arts teachers. CSCOPE, created for implementation in Texas public schools, is directly aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Research objectives included the effect of implementation on experienced teachers and how it affected their general or personal teaching efficacy, curricular planning, and attitudes about the profession.

A qualitative case study research method guided this study. Purposeful sampling was used in order to ensure that the subjects selected would be able to best encompass a true experience of the curriculum being explored. The subjects for these case studies were four teachers from four different school districts in Texas. The four teachers were in schools that had implemented the CSCOPE curriculum at the time of the interviews. Each teacher was required to have three years minimum of teaching experience prior to

the implementation of CSCOPE. In actuality, they all had significantly more experience, ranging from a teacher in her 8<sup>th</sup> year to a teacher in her 29<sup>th</sup> year.

Because each teacher worked in a different school and had varying experiences, their stories were different, but similarities certainly existed. The similarities of their experiences became apparent and produced three major themes that emerged from this study: 1) CSCOPE is terrific in theory but ineffective in practice, 2) Good teachers teach in spite of CSCOPE, not with it, 3) CSCOPE makes too many false assumptions about students.

The findings indicate that while the CSCOPE curriculum is an idea that would work in an idealized educational system, because the teacher is the variable and students have different needs, CSCOPE is an unrealistic mandate for all Texas schools. Additionally, problems arise with gifted education, and Advanced Placement, and other high-performing programs. CSCOPE does not address any differentiation for gifted students. In some schools, due to enrollment levels or scheduling conflicts, all levels are included in one classroom. To mandate a teacher use one curriculum system and serve all students is unrealistic.

## **DEDICATION**

This work was the result of a literal epiphany on August 3, 2006, a result of a teacher training session with my co-chair, Dr. Joyce Juntune. Epiphanies are a result of both wisdom and revelation. So this work is dedicated to the wisdom imparted by Joyce and the revelation imparted by the Lord Jesus Christ, proving that the truth still sets me free (John 8:32).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completing a Ph.D. doesn't happen in a vacuum, and so many made this possible. Once again, I must acknowledge my co-chair, Dr. Joyce E. Juntune. She is a true friend of graduate students who has the goal of their success in mind, far above her own desires for them. It's rare to find such a treasure in academia. She is cherished among the Texas A&M University educational psychology students, especially me. Likewise, they say graduate school really comes down to the committee. It's true. So many have shared Ph.D. horror stories, but I don't have one. I have had a committee that has made it a pleasure to work and achieve this goal. I'm deeply appreciative of Dr. Michael Ash, my co-chair, whose good nature and willingness to step in benefitted me greatly. I am also deeply grateful for Professor Rodney Hill and Dr. Ben Welch, who offered their insight, support and perspective from the fields of architecture and management, respectively, which helped deepen my own understanding and perspective within education. This section cannot be complete without acknowledging the continued support and guidance of emeritus professor, Dr. William Nash. Serving as my co-chair until his retirement, I was able to benefit from his wisdom and guidance for the first year of my program and I am honored that he continues to support me, even in retirement. It's a demonstration of his quality as a professor and a person.

I'm deeply grateful for the four teachers, "Frankie," "Anne," "JB," and "Victoria," who gave of their time and told me their stories so I could understand what their world was like, and perhaps give a glimpse back to the academic world through their honesty. Truly, I grew in my admiration of the job these teachers have dedicated

their lives to each day. They are top-notch professionals, and they are a blessing to our classrooms.

On a personal level, my support came from many areas. I decided to complete a Ph.D. for my own benefit, not a career or financial one. I'm grateful to friends who saw this as a positive thing and did not doubt my faith would be rocked in progress. On the contrary, it has grown. Robin Lynne Bowser, still my best friend and spiritual mom, through it all, I thank you.

Additionally, I'm thankful to Stephen Bowser, Lianna Reid, Steven and Camilla Charles, Sandra McGarry, Rob and Debbie Zema, my pastor, David Strahan, as well as one of my heroes of faith, Lou Engle, whose words to me in January 2009, "We *need* Ph.D.s," drove me on to finish this race for purposes only Heaven knows so far.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Prescribed curriculum is a debate that has intensified among educational stakeholders since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001. While there has often existed a measure of prescribed curriculum (Slavin & Madden, 2000; Datnow & Castellano, 2000), prior to NCLB it was not so prolific. This proliferation of prescribed curriculum has recently made its way state-wide into Texas with the advent of CSCOPE. CSCOPE is an online curriculum system (The Texas Education Service Center Curriculum Collaborative, 2008), developed by a consortium of Education Service Centers. It is fully aligned with the state teaching standards, known as the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and the state testing system, based on that, known as the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). CSCOPE entered as a sort of third strand in completing the classroom resources of curriculum in the state. Sheneman (2008) examined CSCOPE and says that “an underlying assumption is that students who master the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills will also be successful on the state examination” (p.17). The CSCOPE curriculum vertically aligns all the TEKS into a year-long scope and sequence, assuring coverage of all the skills required. This is necessary because the TEKS were not written for classroom use. Instead, they are a list of skills that should be covered (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, 2008) by teachers in each content area in the course of an academic year.

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This dissertation follows the style of *Teaching Education*.

CSCOPE, as an answer to the need to for classroom presentation of the TEKS, aligns the TEKS into workable lesson plans that are meant to be taught in the classroom, unlike the TEKS listing of skills. Lessons within CSCOPE are designed with the 5E Model, developed in 1989 by the Biological Science Curriculum Study Group (BSCS) and include the following: Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate. According to the BSCS, this model has been used since the 1980s for varieties of lessons and curriculums, and is a significant tool in curriculum, especially science based curricular models (Bybee, et. al., 2006).

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The influx of prescribed curriculum has raised many issues as to what makes an effective curriculum and what tools help in developing or contribute to hindering teacher efficacy; these issues bring other questions and sub-issues, such as whether prescribing a curriculum infringes upon a teacher's professionalism, creativity, and freedoms. With prescribed reading programs having taken root in schools for much of the last decade or more, CSCOPE is just a bigger piece of the curriculum puzzle that educators are trying to solve in a way that raises test scores and, as such, broadens student achievement to a level that is measurable. As high-stakes testing increases, stakeholders seek new ways to ensure test scores are at the necessary levels to be classified as successful by the system in which they function. One manner in which this is achieved is through prescribed curriculum ,and it is likely not going anywhere, anytime soon.

Educators continue to struggle for the best ways to teach all students in the same setting at levels at which they can learn both at a high enough level to develop critical

thinking and while not contributing to their frustration when they are challenged.

Prescribed curriculum exists as a sort of educational plum line which seeks to assure that a student at a low performing poor, inner city school will gain the same education, at least theoretically, as a student at a high performing affluent, suburban school. While curriculum may have neutrality about its content, a question raised about a prescribed curriculum is whether it is possible for the first-year teacher, the alternatively-certified teacher, and the longer term experienced teacher to share one lesson plan they do not write and effectively teach the same lesson regardless of their time and experience in education.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study sought to further understand the impact of prescribed curriculum on experienced teachers and how it has affected their general or personal teaching efficacy, curricular planning, and attitudes about the profession. The results of this study attempt to provide guidance to teachers who want to remain effective while teaching a prescribed curriculum.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions guided this study:

- 1) What is it like to be an experienced teacher in a school adopting the CSCOPE curriculum?
- 2) How do teachers using CSCOPE curriculum maintain the level of teaching diversity and professionalism that is needed to be an effective teacher?

## **LIMITATIONS**

Generalization is not appropriate in a qualitative project. The findings may assist teachers in understanding ways to remain effective while teaching prescribed curriculum. The findings may also provide understanding to administrators as they work with experienced teachers as they implement the CSCOPE curriculum. Other schools with similar situations may be able to transfer the findings for similar purposes.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

1. “CSCOPE curriculum – “CSCOPE, developed by Texas Education Service Centers and a team of content experts, is a comprehensive, customized, user-friendly curriculum management system built on the most current research-based practices in the field. Its primary focus is to impact instructional practices in the classroom to improve student performance. This multi-faceted system includes three key components operating seamlessly together: • Curriculum and Assessment • Professional Development • Innovative Technology” (TESCCC, 2008 )
2. Curriculum - the content being taught and the way in which it is organized (O'Donnell, Reeve and Smith. 2007, p. 277).
3. Prescribed Curriculum – Curriculum that is written and designed by a person or entity besides the teacher teaching it, mean to be imitated and taught as written by the teacher.
4. Purposive Sampling – Purposely selecting a sample that encompasses the construct of interest and can give rich detail about that construct.

5. Member Check–“Provides for credibility by allowing members of stakeholding groups to test categories, interpretations and conclusions” (Erlandson, et. al., 1993, p.142).
6. Peer Debriefing– Peer debriefing assists with credibility by allowing a peer who is a professional outside of the context, with a general understanding of the study to analyze materials, listen to the researcher’s questions and concerns, and test hypotheses and emerging designs (Erlandson, et. al., 1993).
7. Triangulation– Helps establish credibility by using multiple sources of data, including, time, person; methods, including observations, interviews and documents; investigators, single or multiple; theory, single versus multiple analysis perspectives (Erlandson, et. al., 1993).
8. Prolonged Engagement– Spending an adequate amount of time with the subject to allow the researcher to see and experience what the subject does. In essence, experiencing the culture over a period of time that brings a deeper reality to the experience to one not engaged in it permanently (Erlandson, et. al., 1993).
9. TAKS - The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills. State standards-based test for Texas students in grades 3-11 in core areas of English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Tests given depend on grade level, with math and reading done annually. All four exit level core area tests for 11<sup>th</sup> graders are required for graduation in a Texas public high school.

10. TEKS- The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. The list of content standards applying to public and charter education in the state of Texas. Each grade level and content area has its own TEKS list.
11. AEIS- Academic Excellence Indicator System The rating system report in Texas that reports a myriad of indicators to a school and district success, including, but not limited to: test scores, dropout rates, federal progress, budget, teacher salary, college readiness. These reports are generated annually to show a picture of the school district with data.
12. SIOP- Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol- Sheltered instruction is an English immersion approach to instruction and classroom management that teachers can use to help English language learners acquire English and content area knowledge and skills, which must address affective, cognitive, and linguistic needs (Building Connections, TEA).
13. LEP - Limited English Proficiency – A term applied to students such as recent immigrants and others who have tested low in English proficiency skills due to a language barrier.
14. ESOL- English for speakers of other languages. A high school class for students whose first language is not English, which may be substituted for English I or II, according to Texas Administrative Code §128.41 and .42, which are TEKS chapters.
15. ELA- English Language Arts, also called ELAR (English Language Arts and Reading). This is the language arts section of both the TEKS and CSCOPE

curriculum by subject. It incorporates all areas of English language arts, including reading and writing and the various sub-units that fall under them.

16. 5E Model- Lessons within CSCOPE are designed with this model, developed in 1989 by the Biological Science Curriculum Study Group (BSCS) and include the following: Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate as the set up and areas of CSCOPE lesson plans.

## **DESIGN OF THE DISSERTATION**

The dissertation is divided into five main chapters. Chapter I is the introduction to the research project, the statement of the problem and basic literature supporting it as such, the purpose of the study, research questions which guide the study, limitations of the research, and definition of terms. Chapter II is a review of the literature which is relevant to the research project and supports the study. Chapter III outlines the study's methodology, human instruments use and methods of collecting and analyzing data. Chapter IV contains a narrative of the results with thick description of the people interviewed and the knowledge the researcher gained in interviewing them. Chapter V contains the summary and conclusions of the research project with the emergent themes, summary of findings and possible future research opportunities.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **CURRICULUM**

Curriculum can be defined in several ways, but most simply, it is the content being taught and the way in which it is organized (O'Donnell, Reeve and Smith. 2007, p. 277). Curriculum itself is as old as education (Kliebard, 1996). Because of this, "Implicit in all the forms that curriculum history takes is the way in which social and political forces interact with both openly articulated and subtly intimated preferences as to school knowledge," (Kliebard, 157). Thus, curriculum itself becomes a "significant social and cultural artifact" (Kliebard, 157) that reflects the knowledge, values and beliefs of a particular society or culture.

#### **HISTORY OF CURRICULUM IN TEXAS**

In Texas, statewide, curriculum did not exist until the 1984-85 academic year when Essential Elements (EEs) were installed in the state school system (Nelson, McGhee, Meno, and Slater, 2007). Until this implementation, school districts were left to their own devices to create curriculum, which sometimes meant that teachers were asked to teach classes for which no curriculum existed. EEs helped to neutralize and stabilize curriculum so that students had a more regular instructional environment.

Early assessment in Texas began in the mid-80s as well with the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS) and Texas Education Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS), but these were designed only for meeting minimal requirements as norm-referenced tests. When the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS)

emerged, developed by the Texas Education Agency and aligned with the EEs, this test became a criterion-referenced test to match state curriculum (Nelson, et. al., 2007). This test, aligned with the curriculum, then produced the educational monitoring system known as the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). The AEIS existed to monitor campus, district, and state level reporting, allowing all stakeholders to monitor if students were learning the curriculum as examined by the tests (Nelson, et. al., 2007). This was the beginning of having consistent student performance data available to every teacher, principal and superintendent statewide.

In 1996, a new curriculum replaced the EEs. The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) were approved 1996 and implemented in 1997. This created the beginning of the Texas testing era in which many said the 2,000 page draft had objectives not written in ways that were “testable,” and this indicated entering an assessment system which would not measure what students learned but what they *learn* (Nelson, et. al., 2007, p. 705). This change brought about new classes, paralleling the new state test, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), such as TAKS Math, or TAKS English.

Previously, under the TAAS, only regular education students in grades 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11 were tested in math, reading and writing. In 1994, TAAS added grades 4 and 8, and in 1995 social studies and science testing was included in grade 8, as well as end-of-course tests in algebra I and biology, which was expanded to include English II and US History in 1998. At the same time, a Spanish version of the TAAS was added for students in grade 3-5, and in 2000, an alternate assessment for special education students

was added. According to Nelson, et.al. (2007), this constantly changing testing arena was fertile ground for educators placing high accountability on test scores and adding benchmarks and other types of assessments which are built into CSCOPE today.

In May, 1995 the 74th Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 1, which established a new part of the Texas Education Code. This new code instructed the State Board of Education to create a required curriculum both for the four core areas, as well as enrichment subjects. This directive included the phrase “assessment instruments and textbooks will be required to be aligned with the essential knowledge and skills.” Thus, the path had reversed from testing what was taught to teaching what was on the test (S.B.1, 1995).

## **CSCOPE**

Sheneman (2008) examined CSCOPE and says that “an underlying assumption is that students who master the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills will also be successful on the state examination” (p.17). The CSCOPE curriculum vertically aligns all the TEKS into a year-long scope and sequence, assuring that all of the skills required will be covered in an academic year. This is necessary because the TEKS were not written for classroom use. Instead, they are a list of skills that should be covered (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, 2008 ). CSCOPE, as a result, aligns the TEKS into workable lesson plans that are meant to be taught in the classroom, unlike the TEKS listing of skills.

CSCOPE is designed with several components inherent within each unit. They include: Vertical Alignment Documents, Instructional Focus Documents, Units of Study,

Weekly Lesson Planner, Year at a Glance, TEKS Verification Matrix, Unit Tests and Statewide Professional Development Activities (Curriculum Components, 2007).

According to CSCOPE, the TEKS were designed as a framework and were never intended to be the curriculum. CSCOPE provides such help as the Vertical Alignment Documents which “give our teachers clear direction on WHAT they are supposed to teach” (p. 6) and Year at a Glance, which “Give our teachers a timeline that tells them WHEN they should teach certain standards” (TESCCC, 2007, p.7). This is not a testing curriculum, they say: CSCOPE is not a curriculum designed “to teach the test”; however, the Vertical Alignment Documents allow teachers to see the progression of the development of tested student expectations with specificity, so that they can understand how essential learning builds throughout a student’s school experience” (TESCCC, 2008).

Lessons within CSCOPE are designed with the 5E Model, developed in 1989 by the Biological Science Curriculum Study Group (BSCS) and include the following: Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate.

According to the BSCS, this model has been used since the 1980s for varieties of lessons and curriculums and is a significant tool in curriculum, especially science based curricular models. Dating back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy of Johann Herbart’s psychology of learning synthesized a student’s prior knowledge to new ideas and eventually form into new learning. This method then proceeded to direct instruction to the teacher to give the learner information he could not gain on his own. It was then followed with a demonstration of learning (Bybee, et. al., 2006). The 5E model was also

based on John Dewey's 1930s model of "complete act of thought" which involves "sense a perplexing situation, clarify the problem, formulate a hypothesis, test the hypothesis, revise tests, and act on solutions" (p.3). Finally, it is directly descended from the 1960s Atkin and Karplus learning cycle. Science Curriculum Improvement Study (SCIS) which used the terms *exploration*, *invention*, and *discovery*, later modified to: *exploration*, *term introduction*, and *concept application*. BSCS added a phase on prior knowledge at the beginning of the cycle, and it added one to evaluate student understanding at the end. The 5E model was born. Since the 1980s BSCS has used the 5E model as a core in its integrated science and biology programs at all academic levels (Bybee, et. al., 2006).

### **OTHER PRESCRIBED CURRICULUM**

Although Texas is new at such a comprehensive curriculum system implementation, other systems have been in place for several years, particularly following the introduction of the No Child Left Behind Act, which replaced and brought major changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Within the state of Texas, the Houston Independent School District has had its own comprehensive curriculum for several years. The Clarifying Learning to Enhance Achievement Results (CLEAR) curriculum is composed of Power Objectives which include: Endurance, asking if the skill and lesson will be of use beyond the day it is taught, Leverage, which is connected to multi-disciplinary use of a skill, rather than a single subject use; and Readiness for the next level of learning (or simply, Readiness), which, as implied, asks whether the lesson is contributing to the student's advancement to another class or grade

level. In its 2007 training, participants are given *Power Standards: Identifying the Standards that Matter the Most* (2003) as a tool to support these objectives (Houston Independent School District, 2007). In addition to the Power Objectives, HISD's curriculum provides similar components to CSCOPE's. These components include: Year At A Glance, Vertical Alignment Matrix, TEKS/TAKS Correlations, Horizontal Alignment Planning Guides. Similar to what CSCOPE offers, these provide detailed lesson plans and other tools for teachers through a comprehensive online curriculum system.

However, CLEAR isn't just for Houston anymore. In 2002, the district began marketing CLEAR to districts both in and out of Texas (Archer, 2006). The district spent three years and more than \$10 million to develop CLEAR, which has 69 courses for Pre-K-grade 12. School districts such as Charleston County, SC and St. Louis, MO are those outside Texas which have purchased CLEAR. These districts say that they may have to rearrange the components to meet their state standards but that having a solid starting place is an effort worth the cost (Archer, 2006). The district did not set out to market its curriculum but saw the demand after presenting it at a late 1990s education conference in Texas when an HISD administrator found herself surrounded by leaders from other districts who wanted the opportunity to purchase the program. This led to the HISD marketing of CLEAR (Archer, 2006).

To be sure, Texas is not the only place prescribed curriculum can be found. Several schools nationwide have implemented some form of prescribed curriculum, which has been the subject of research and analysis in recent years. Milosevic (2007)

looked at NCLB's Reading First Initiative and its impact on curriculum choice. Examining Programs such as Open Court, Success for All and Direct Instruction, Milosevic expressed concern that these "scripted curricula" have met criteria for increasing literacy. Scripted curricula, while in existence for decades, rose to the forefront when the National Reading Panel (NRP) released its study which supported "explicit and systemic instruction and phonemic awareness as the most effective means of reading instruction" (Milosevic, 2007, p. 28; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). The Los Angeles Unified School District adopted scripted curricula in 1999 and by 2001, one in eight California schools used Open Court. However, Milosevic shows that the research presents evidence that these programs become ineffective after grade 2. Additionally, she shows, scripted programs monopolize time in the school day by requiring so much time that little is left for unique teacher instruction. The research also fails to take into account the variance in student ability. One critic said these curricula are an "insult to the talents and professional abilities of teacher" (Milosevic, 2007, p. 29). Another criticism around these programs for reading involves vocabulary. Because of the time involved in following the scripted aspects, some argue that developing essential vocabulary is hindered because the programs assume all children have a certain level of vocabulary. This proves inaccurate in some areas with large numbers of low socio-economic populations; thus, leading the student to fall behind as he is trying to decipher a word while the script is continuing. Milosevic posits that the increase in standardized testing will lead more districts nationwide to be attracted to scripted curriculum.

One of the programs Milosevic discusses was the subject of another study. Success for All (SFA) which “is a schoolwide program for students in grades pre-K to five which organizes resources to attempt to ensure that virtually every student will reach the third grade on time with adequate basic skills and build on this basis throughout the elementary grades, that no student will be allowed to ‘fall between the cracks’” (Slavin and Madden, 2000, p.3). Datnow and Castellano (2000) looked at this curriculum in their study on Success For All (SFA), described as an “aggressive approach” (p. 776) reform model of changing the teaching and learning process (Datnow and Castellano, 2000). The SFA foundation mandates that the majority (80%) of a school’s teaching staff vote to implement it before it can be used. Studying two elementary schools in California, they examined teacher beliefs and responses as the schools implemented SFA. Like other prescribed curriculum, SFA provides all manuals, supplements, even posters to hang on bulletin boards and novels for older readers. The curriculum occurs in 90 minute class periods and requires teachers stick closely to the scripts. SFA functions in a way that teachers are to be the “the major agents in implementing the reform (Datnow and Castellano, 2000). They reported varying results among teachers, depending on their support of SFA. Among teachers who supported it, they found teachers valued the tenets of the program as well as the consistency of all teachers using a similar structure and they felt, despite some complaints, it was a worthwhile curriculum. Teachers who “simply accepted” SFA saw more negatives in the program than they did positives. They noted that a population increase of a “lower socio-economic group”(p. 789) contributed to the adoption and use of SFA. These teachers



mostly followed the program but some admitting to slight modifications. Teachers who were “vehemently opposed” to SFA liked the 90 minute class period but criticized the materials and pedagogical approaches. They disliked the one size fits all model, also. And many admitted to making major changes to the program.

Datnow and Castellano (2000) also found that buy-in to the program did not predict the amount of fidelity of teacher implementation. Teachers also admitted that sometimes they changed the program to “make teaching easier and more enjoyable for them” (Datnow and Castellano, 2000, p.791).

Two major issues with SFA that have been railed against other prescribed curriculum are reported by Datnow and Castellano (2000), as well. One is the constraint of autonomy and creativity. The other is one Paulo Freire describes as “the banking model of education” in which information is deposited in a learner’s head. Freire’s 1970 indictment on education says that “Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the “banking” concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits” (p. 240) and that as “students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world” (p. 241). He notes this educational system is dehumanizing. While this is strong language for a simple reading

or math program, this is the essence of how many opponents of prescribed curriculum see its function.

Still more controversy surrounded another popular prescribed reading program for teachers in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), as investigated by MacGillivray, Ardell, Curwen, Saucedo, and Palma, (2004). They concluded that teachers forced to follow a scripted reading program stripped them of opportunity to use their own literacy knowledge (MacGillivray, et. al., 2004) and noted that it may help beginner teachers to feel more competent, but, experienced teachers' "previous identities are effectively dismantled by the district and supplanted by a newly constructed and inferior identity" (MacGillivray, et. al., 2004, p. 138). The *Open Court* curriculum goes as far as scripting the bulletin board content and furniture arrangement in all classrooms, mandating the student's desk be positioned in a U-shaped format to promote visibility of *Open Court* materials by all students. (MacGillivray, et. al., 2004). *Open Court* is a part of the SRA reading program and it bases its results on the improvement of test scores in schools which use it, calling the clear results of its achievement notable by the increase in points between *Open Court* schools, versus non-*Open Court* schools (McRae, 2002). In fact, McRae's research reports says the analysis of test scores provides evidence that schools using SRA/*Open Court* reading materials earned higher test score gains than schools using other reading materials (McRae, 2002).

While some proponents of prescribed curriculum are citing the American Federation for Teachers (AFT), the national teacher's union, as being supportive of their

methods, the AFT says “we do not support state-mandated intractable ‘scripted’ curricula that provide no flexibility for teachers (AFT, 2003, p.19).

Valencia, et.al (2006) found that the way in which teachers interact with curriculum influences their sense of efficacy as well as identity and vision. This four year, four teacher study looked at teachers using various curriculum. They found all teachers felt it was their job to create reading programs in their classes and to meet the needs of a wide variety of students, but three of these teachers were assigned specific curriculum mandates with materials expected to be implemented. They found similar problems such as it limiting creativity, or teacher autonomy with the teachers who were mandated to use certain materials and that “mandated reading curriculum does not necessarily result in substantive teacher learning thoughtful instruction or best classroom practices” (Valencia, et. al., 2006, p. 114). They argue that when there is a presence of comprehensive curriculum material and prescribed instruction with mandates to follow it, teachers have little need to think. They add that these issues are even greater for beginning teachers who may not feel as confident or be as likely to question the experts. They say that “beginning teachers may be most susceptible to the limited effects of effects of tightly regulated curriculum and curricular decision making and most likely to carry those effects into their later years of teaching” (p. 114) and add that “teachers will not improve their practice if they are absolved of thinking” (Valencia, et. al., 2006, p. 114).

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Another issue Valencia, et. al. (2006) noted was that professional development was lacking, causing a misunderstanding and waste of instructional time and that mandated curriculum is not as simple as handing it to teachers. The issue of professional development has been raised with both the influx of prescribed curriculum, as well as the implementation of NCLB, which carried with it a professional development requirement. Mizell (2005), surveyed educator reactions to the success of implementation of this provision and found, among other things, that some educators feel that because of NCLB they have less time for genuine staff development because of the requirements to revise and follow curriculum and standards. Thus, teacher training has become that of learning prescribed curriculum, whether in specifically mandated curriculum or test training. As a result, educators felt that the very act meant to give them more professional development had hindered it. By contrast, many felt that they were receiving more professional development due to the need to meet requirements for NCLB. However, like prescribed curriculum, the reaction seems to be dependent on the school situation, with many feeling the loss of autonomy in the implementation.

Thomas (1997), in looking at standards for prescribing curriculum, asks if micromanaging teachers is truly reform. He presents that teachers are specialists in topics, ideas and passion for their disciplines. He asks “What is a teacher to do if the directives in a state framework of curriculum choices and instructional designs do not coordinate with the best pieces of a teacher’s craft? And do students gain or lose from the decision to adhere to the framework? (Thomas, 1997, p. 123). While prescribed

curriculum and mandated programs are often under the banner of educational reform, this is the manner in which it is often criticized, as well.

Wheelan and Kesselring (2005) add to this mix as they make some notable connections with group development, which, since teachers function in groups in their areas of study and are linked by curriculum mandates, impacts how curriculum is taught and how schools function. They examined the link between faculty group development and the scores of elementary students on standardized tests. Using the Group Development Questionnaire (GDQ), which looks at the level of group development, they found that the manners in which faculty members work together bear a significant result on student outcome, with higher level group development showing greater success. Notably, the GDQ levels show that high levels show a group making decisions, and encouraging high performance and quality of work, where lower levels show a leader discussing what the group does. This has impact for prescribed curriculum as the very prescription of it often forces a lower level of group functioning. They note that “The more directive a consultant is with a group, the less likely that group is to change. Consultants who act as educators and design a process in which the group can make its own decisions will have better results” (Wheelan and Kesselring, 2005, p. 329). The fact that consultants in most prescribed curriculum are there to indicate a specific method and not to allow group decisions could impact response and reaction to group development, a characteristic, the researchers note, significantly related to test scores, which is what most prescribed curriculum purports to help do: raise tests scores.

Zeichner and Bekisizwe (2008) discuss some disturbing trends in professional development as it relates to teacher training and prescribed curriculum as well. They note that while most agree that teachers are the most critical aspect of determining the quality of a nation's educational system, the ways in which they should be trained different vastly:

At one extreme, there has been a focus by many on preparing teachers at low cost as low-level technicians and civil servants who can obediently follow a scripted curriculum and prescribed teaching methods. In the USA..., a high official in the national education department has referred to the preparation of 'good enough teachers,' just good enough to follow a scripted curriculum and be trained in prescribed teaching practices that are allegedly based on research. He and others ... have claimed that tightly monitoring teachers' actions, scripting the curriculum, and intensifying standardized achievement testing with serious consequences for schools and teachers related to the examination results will lead to a raising of educational quality and a narrowing of the achievement gaps between different groups. (Zeichner and Bekisizwe, 2008, p. 332)

They also point out that the other extreme is to create "reflective professionals" with the discretion to teach how they want, as an antidote to prescription. They caution that when teachers are ignored or when reforms come from above or are not connected to the daily realities of the classroom, and local environment, even the most expensive and well-designed interventions are almost sure to fail. (Zeichner and Bekisizwe, 2008, p. 340). Clearly, professional development in teacher education is not one size fits all.

## INTERNATIONAL CURRICULUM

An interesting note occurs across the Atlantic where England has recently loosed its national curriculum. Originated in the 1980s, the English National Curriculum drove schools until July 12, 2007 when the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) was launched, and saw implementation in September 2008 (Ward and Connolly, 2008). Mansell (2007) asked in his *London Times* article how teachers will cope when the shackles come off. He brings up some issues that must be examined in light of our turn to standardized curriculum, especially in regards to newer educators, as brought about by the Association of School and College Leaders who say that many of the younger educators have not ever had to use their professional judgment in curriculum planning and might face fear or reticence now that these shackles have been removed. This idea was met with conflict from the National Association for Teaching English which likens those teachers to the “Stockholm Syndrome” in that “The hostages ended up identifying emotionally with the captors” (Mansell, 2007, p.22). Meanwhile, science teachers, who found their curriculum move from 18 pages to 5 expressed concern over their own staff making up for those reductions. Mick Waters, Director of Curriculum, QCA, says that the new curriculum is a “significant milestone for education in England. The new curriculum offers real opportunities for schools to raise the aspiration and achievement of their students by making learning relevant, engaging and irresistible for our youngsters” (QCA, 2008). Further, they say that this curriculum is “designed to give teachers a less prescriptive, more flexible framework for teaching, creating more scope to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of each individual student” (QCA, 2007). This

was echoed in a speech by Andrew Motion at the launch of the new secondary curriculum. Motion said that the revised curriculum shows a belief that education is not a “cramming-job, in which pupils are coerced into swallowing and with a bit of luck digesting the facts and figures which will equip them for later life, but rather to present education as a form of personal development” (Motion, 2008). Motion argues that the reduction of prescribed curriculum allows for what he says is vital in education: creativity.

Ironically, Ward and Connolly (2008), in response to this new curriculum, say it’s a start but the fact that prescribed lists for literature exist at all, which they do, is still showing English has not mastered a curriculum solution, for it would recognize the need to expand and not limit itself to a prescribed reading list, no matter how comprehensive it appears, because this is restrictive. The Cox report, as cited in Ward and Connolly, (2008), points out that “teachers are better placed than government officials to understand the particular needs of their pupils and to cater to those needs through the selection of texts” (Ward and Connolly, 2008, p. 296).

Yet the Texas State Board of Education, recently embroiled in its struggle to design new English Language Arts standards for the first time in a decade, to be implemented in the fall of 2010 decided tentatively to refrain from a prescribed or suggested literature list, even as the state is rapidly going to a prescribed curriculum. It will be late spring of 2009 before the final standards are voted on in Texas, at which point, it would seem likely CSCOPE would have to be further modified to meet the new standards. Thus far, the revisions include reading comprehension strategies across the



grade levels, with grammar as a sub-strand as writing and not a separate strand of its own (Zehr, 2008).

### **TEACHER EFFICACY**

Teacher efficacy closely ties into prescribed curriculum simply because of the nature of prescription, meaning its source is in someone else rather than the professional him or herself. Wheatley (2002) defines teacher or teaching efficacy as teachers' beliefs about their ability to influence outcomes within their students. Teachers with a high sense of efficacy believe what they do influences what the student does or how high the student will achieve academically. Teacher efficacy, of course, comes from self-efficacy which Bandura (1997) defined as the "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of actions required to produce given attainments" (p.3) Strong efficacy has been related to higher student achievement (Wheatley, 2002). However, Wheatley argues that doubts in one's efficacy as an educator can actually be beneficial as it will cause a teacher to challenge him or herself to learn and grow, rather than hand the educator the answers as prescribed curriculums do and place it in a packet to be taught.

Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson and Fry (2004) examined situations in which methods of teaching are dictated. They investigated a new teacher intern being placed in the classroom with a cooperating teacher who had a structured way of doing things. The result was that this new teacher was not allowed to use the Constructivist methods her university had taught her and she ended up relying on basal readers (a foundation of prescribed curriculum) and workbooks, even to the cost of her not believing she was doing the best job possible. The researchers likened her experience to

a dance studio where footprints are embedded on the floor and new dancers are to step on the exact footprints to learn to dance (Smagorinsky, et. al., 2004).

Ironically, CSCOE says its 5E model of lessons is *based* on a Constructivist method of learning but often teachers feel constrained from using their pedagogical skills because they have not been involved in the Constructivist process themselves; that is, they have been handed curriculum rather than allowed to design it. Henson (2001) looked at teacher efficacy in an alternative school in light of the teacher's participation on research. Teachers worked collaboratively and designed their own research for both behavioral and cognitively based lessons and found that when teachers were allowed to collaborate and be a part of professional development, that teachers' efficacy improved from pretest to posttest (Henson, 2001). Two explanation cited for the efficacy gains were:

- 1) That teacher research can be a powerful method of professional development which can result in a gain in teacher efficacy;
- 2) The alternative school setting might have provided an extraordinary setting for teachers to implement their teacher research project and, thus, grow in efficacy. (Henson, 2001)

Prescribed curriculum is collaborative only in its meetings to execute development.

Pease-Alvarez and Samway (2008) looked at this dilemma in a school that implemented a scripted reading program. They found that there were a variety of reactions on the part of the teachers who were under a district-wide mandate to use a reading program. They described it as "teacher centered, scripted, and places considerable emphasis on whole-

class instruction” (Pease-Alvarez and Samway, 2008, p. 32). They found the following key characteristics:

- 1) Radical changes in the teachers’ practices due to the program mandate;
- 2) Lost agency in the teachers’ professional lives
- 3) A lack of overt resistance by most teachers, but subtle resistance by many

(Pease-Alvarez and Samway, 2008, p. 35)

Noting that the scripted curriculum came to dominate the school day, they discuss that *all* the teachers they observed said they felt they had lost control over their teaching and that it was “undermined and disrespected” (p. 36) Some teachers simply adjusted the program a bit to work better with their classes, even though they were directed to implement it as written. One teacher announced she was “done using the program” p. 37) and was fortunate to have a principal who, essentially, allowed her to do so.

Ultimately, however, the loss of teaching agency led to a lack of collaboration because the program served as a sort of divider within the school (Pease-Alvarez and Samway, 2008).

Schultz (2008) found his efficacy in a conscious rebellion of prescription. In a place where he was to teach to a test, he argues that “it is essential that teachers be political, especially in the current state of affairs, in which one-size-fits-all testing is prescribed as the only way to improve education, (Schultz, 2008p. 8). He challenged the system by asking students what problem they wanted to see solved, replacing a dilapidated school building, and created what he says is a “justice-oriented” classroom. This assignment became a social action curriculum project for their year and effectively

usurped the “teach to the test” curriculum to focus on one that was based on student needs. (Schultz, 2008). Schultz says this social action teaching was effective on many levels and is necessary, especially in racially diverse or lower-performing schools where often students (and teachers) may feel the cards are stacked against them.

## **SUMMARY**

When the No Child Left Behind Act became a reality, schools scrambled to meet the higher standards set by the act, and often, this included modifying curriculum. The last decade has seen an increase in prescribed curriculum, which has now made its way into Texas through a consortium of ten of 20 Education Service Centers. Sold to school districts across the state, the CSCOPE curriculum has become the teacher’s right hand tool, whether he or she likes it or not.

Prescribed curriculum has had few instructional fans in the past, but CSCOPE is new territory for Texas, so it remains to be seen how it will impact curriculum, ultimately. Sahin (2007), says schools have been turned into factories where students are reproduced “individuals capable of maximizing the efficiency of the workplace” (p. 948) and “the disempowered teacher processes the raw student to better fit the dominant forms” (p. 949). CSCOPE touts itself on all its documents as a “guaranteed and viable curriculum.” Perhaps the answer of which view is more accurate can only be answered with the teachers themselves.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the methodology used to guide this study such as participants, research design, data collection and analysis and validation. This study focuses on the implementation of a widespread prescribed curriculum, CSCOPE, and its impact on experienced teachers. It seeks to understand their experience with this curriculum and how it affects their professional development, teacher efficacy, creativity, and other important aspects of teachers' professional lives. The following research questions guided this study:

- 1) What is it like to be an experienced teacher in a school adopting the CSCOPE curriculum?
- 2) How do teachers using CSCOPE curriculum maintain the level of teaching diversity, creativity, and professionalism that is needed to be an effective teacher?

#### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

A qualitative case study research method guided this study. Qualitative research is important to “explore a problem, rather than to use predetermined information” and also “because we need a *complex*, detailed understanding of the issue” (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). Generalization is not appropriate to case studies; instead, these limited views into the cases allow us to examine these cases with more depth and gain deeper understanding. Qualitative research “begins with philosophical assumptions that inquirers make in deciding to undertake a qualitative study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 15).

Qualitative researchers will enter a project with a variety of their worldviews, paradigms, and beliefs, and will use interpretive and theoretical frameworks to shape the study. Good qualitative research makes these factors explicit and leaves the researchers aware they exist (Creswell, 2007, p. 15). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the word” and add that qualitative researchers “turn the world into a series of representations, including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to self... [they] study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.3)

Creswell (2007) notes that using qualitative research is preferred and necessary when we need to explore a problem or issue in a situation in which gathering literature or predetermined information could not adequately provide us with answers. We need to talk to the people in the situation, ask them our research questions, hear their stories, and understand their connection to the subject in such a way that we enter their world. Quantitative research cannot adequately fit each problem a researcher may want to explore. Things such as “interactions among people, for example, are difficult to capture with existing measures” (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). Additionally, it should be noted that “qualitative research keeps good company with the most rigorous quantitative research, and it should not be viewed as an easy substitute for a ‘statistical’ or quantitative study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 40-41).

## **SUBJECTS**

Purposeful sampling was used in order to ensure that the subjects chosen would be able to best encompass a true experience of the curriculum being explored. The subjects for these case studies were four teachers from four different school districts in Texas. In case study analysis, usually no more than four or five cases are used because the more subjects used, the less details and information can be included about each.

The four teachers were in schools that had implemented the CSCOPE curriculum at the time of the interviews. Each teacher was required to have three years minimum of teaching prior to the implementation of CSCOPE. In actuality, they all had significantly more experience, ranging from a teacher in her 8<sup>th</sup> year to a teacher in her 29<sup>th</sup> year. Because of the response of teachers, ultimately it was primarily English teachers who replied. CSCOPE exists for all 4 core subject areas; however, the English teachers were the most vocal respondents of the inquiry. Of all the core subjects, obviously, English is the most subjective. Math and science are more fact-based areas, where one right answer can exist much of the time. English language arts has always been a robust subject area by the ambiguity of subjective grading and ways in which one objective can provide many roads to a successful destination.

In order to solicit subjects for the interviews, I invited interested teachers to participate. Initially I did not limit core areas. I put out a call to any experienced teachers in Texas districts, requesting upper and secondary grades. I used a variety of ways to do this. Initially, I tried to find out which schools were using CSCOPE. It was still a relatively new curriculum, only in ten of the twenty regional districts at the time I began

my research, though that has grown, so I attempted to contact my local Education Service Center (ESC). This proved fruitless. The contact forwarded my email to one of the heads of CSCAPE and said before they released any information to me they would need to see a copy of my research proposal. Feeling like this was public information with no need for review by the agency, I proceeded to seek subjects without ESC assistance.

Having worked for many years as a teacher, my next step was to begin emailing teachers I knew and asking if they knew schools using CSCAPE. I also used social networking by posting a notice on one of my accounts asking for anyone who knew of anyone using CSCAPE. This mass solicitation netted me some recommendations. I then sent a Letter of Invitation to the potential subjects via email. In several cases teachers refused, citing that although the school was using CSCAPE they had not been using it in the classroom, and they felt they could not adequately speak of it. The teachers who responded affirmatively all used it to some degree and were mandated, at some level, by administrators in their districts to do so.

Ultimately the subjects included a variety of teachers from very different sizes of districts and locales.

### ***Frankie***

Frankie was a teacher with whom I was familiar with from a previous teaching job. In her 29<sup>th</sup> year of teaching, she was an experienced English and English as a Second Language teacher at the high school level, who had spent 25 years teaching English at the junior high level, as well. The junior high school was a feeder school to



the senior high school where she was teaching at the time of the interview. Both schools were Title I schools, serving large numbers of low-income and high risk students.

Frankie's high school is a 5A school. Besides being certified in secondary English, secondary ESL, all-level reading and physical education, Frankie also has a master's degree in education, which she earned in 2001.

### ***JB***

JB was in her 8<sup>th</sup> year of teaching, having gone back to school after her children were older in order to gain a teaching certificate. Teaching at a 1A school in rural Texas, she was an English and ESL teacher for grades 6-12, also teaching English 4. Having worked day care in the past, JB originally went to college (in the Midwest where she was living) to major in elementary education. A professor in her education program recognized her gifting and said she needed to be teaching high school, a piece of advice she followed. She is certified to teach in another state, where she took the Praxis to get certified, and had to retest in Texas with the ExCET. She said the Praxis was much harder but not accepted in Texas. JB has taught at the same 1A district in rural Texas for all of her career in the state. The school is small and allows her at times to teach the same students for multiple years and develop relationships with them, which she considers important to teaching as well.

### ***Anne***

Anne, in her 16<sup>th</sup> year of teaching, also taught multiple grades because her instance of using CSCAPE was in an English class in an academic alternative school in central Texas. This unique situation of having a prescribed curriculum in a transient

school population was an interesting factor for her and made it an interesting variable in how prescribed curriculum was implemented. Anne taught all grades of high school English language arts, communication applications and journalism. She holds a bachelor's in English with a minor in reading and also holds a master's degree. She and a friend of hers went back to school together and began teaching at the academic alternative school together. The school has a maximum of 40 students with four core teachers and approximately 13-15 students per class. Janet said she was mostly able to work on-one-one with students because of this setting. She noted it was like a family, with the teacher almost like an academic "momma." The school has "fabulous" TAKS passing rates, she said, even if they have failed in the past. She credits the ability to work with each student on an individual basis and the relationships formed that allow for the extra push. To Janet, this is an advantageous setting in which to teach.

### ***Victoria***

Victoria was in her 25<sup>th</sup> year of teaching. Certified in secondary (6-12) English and journalism, she taught at several 5A affluent big-city schools before coming to a rural town and teaching in a 2A school for the past 14 years. Victoria has taught all levels of high school English, both regular and advanced. At the time of the interview, she was teaching 2 sections of Pre-Advanced Placement (AP) English 1, 3 sections of regular English 1 and one section of English II. She has primarily taught English 1 and 2 at this school. She loves her job and her students and finds that at this point in her career, she finally has enough grasp of what she is doing to be free and flexible and does what she knows works. This made CSCOPE an interesting variable in her teaching, but one

she went into with a determination to give all of her efforts to and execute with excellence. Whatever her experiences were, Victoria approached CSCOPE with an open mind, ready to do what she needed to make her students successful.

### ***Summary of Subjects***

These four case studies from very different schools and settings make a nice picture of CSCOPE as it is being implemented all over the state in much the same way: Different teachers, different schools, different grades, different settings. All of the participants in this study happened to be women. That was neither intentional nor problematic. Because teaching is not based on one's sex, it was not a problem for this particular study. Also, with a case-study, we are not generalizing, so these results show us the experience of four teachers only.

### **INSTRUMENTS**

The instrument used for this project will be that of the human form. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe the importance of human instrument as the sole method of gathering data in case study format. The reasons are as follows:

- (1) *Responsiveness*. Human beings react and respond to situation in a way that is unique.
- (2) *Adaptability*. Humans are “multipurpose” beings who can adapt and process many things.
- (3) *Holistic emphasis*. The human instrument is the only one capable of putting the many pieces of the world into a holistic piece rather than only examine its parts.

- (4) *Knowledge base expansion.* The human instrument can competently take propositional knowledge and move it to a realm of feelings and other human experience that make our study rich and deep.
- (5) *Processual immediacy.* The human instrument is the only one which can actually process data on the spot into a hypothesis and immediately test that hypothesis in the situation in which it is formed.
- (6) *Opportunities for clarification and summarization.* The human instrument can take data and information and ask immediately for clarification or summary of it.
- (7) *Opportunity to explore atypical or idiosyncratic responses.* The atypical response cannot ordinarily be coded or aggregated but the human instrument can analyze atypicality to test validity but also to achieve higher and deeper understanding than any other instrument might be capable of doing.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

The following procedures were used to gather the data for this study. First, structured interviews were conducted by the researcher using the planned questions from the interview protocol (see Appendix A), using prolonged engagement, which is simply spending an adequate amount of time with the subject to allow the researcher to see and experience what the subject does. (Erlandson, et. al., 1993).

The interviews took place at the location and time of the teacher's choosing. Each was forthcoming and freely shared about their lives as a teacher and how changes had been dealt with since implementing CSCAPE. Each interview took from 1-2 hours, establishing prolonged engagement with my subjects. I made sure that even when my

questions were complete that they knew they could expand on an answer or add something that had escaped them at the time. No interview lasted less than approximately one hour (Anne) and one went almost 2 hours (Frankie).

### ***Member Checks***

A member check in qualitative research “provides for credibility by allowing members of stakeholding groups to test categories, interpretations and conclusions” (Erlandson, et. al., 1993, p.142). After the first round of structured interviews, I looked for any gaps in information or missing information so I could conduct a follow up interview to probe further into issues raised during the initial interview as well as clarify areas that need additional information. The teachers all found email the easiest way to answer follow up questions.

Some member checks were done immediately following the interview by rereading notes and asking for clarification or repeating back what was written to ensure the interpretation and understanding was correct. Member checks were also done during data analysis by email, verifying certain elements during this period and being sure they were correct and accurate before finalizing them.

### ***Document Search***

Conducting a document search for CSCAPE materials was another important aspect of gathering data for this study. Some teachers interviewed provided me with lesson plans from CSCAPE that I was able to analyze. One teacher, not a part of these case studies, in a CSCAPE district allowed me to look at the documents she had access to, primarily for the middle school level, but in every subject. This online access also

had a section where teachers in participating districts were able to ask questions and received answers from both peers and CSCOPE administrators. Additionally, I searched through various websites from CSCOPE and its member districts and collected information regarding the policies and guidelines provided by the state for the implementation of the CSCOPE curriculum. I looked at various presentations posted online from the state CSCOPE conference, as well as various documents and newsletters sent out by CSCOPE. I also joined a listserv from CSCOPE so I would receive CSCOPE updates and newsletters and could follow any developments as they were being announced. Specifically, I looked at the English Language Arts newsletters. My reasons for focusing on this were twofold. First, since the majority of the subject taught in this field, it seemed the natural to focus on getting CSCOPE information to compare. Also, as a researcher who taught English language arts for eight years in middle and high schools, it was the area to which I could read with the most knowledge and compare the suggestions and curriculum with what I knew.

I also read and joined the mailing list for administrators using CSCOPE. Understanding the directions and mandates CSCOPE was giving administrative leaders the implementation was an important factor in understanding the perceptions and experiences of teachers. Most of the teachers I interviewed commented that the way CSCOPE was presented by administrators was one of the reasons they were averse to it initially. Seeing the perception of CSCOPE through the administrator guidelines was also helpful in studying this topic.

## **ANALYSIS OF DATA**

The data obtained through interviews was analyzed using the constant comparative qualitative method as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The researcher unitized the data, and then categorized the units. Each case study's data (a) had a member check completed before further analysis began, making sure facts and understanding of data were correct to ensure accuracy, (b) were categorized to search for emergent themes, and (c) were translated by the use of thick description. The categories were reviewed for relationship and overlap. The categories that emerge from the interviewing data were further tested through the use of researcher peer debriefing. This process allowed themes to emerge. To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher incorporated prolonged engagement, member checking, and peer debriefing into the study's data collection and data analysis.

Aiding in the analysis of data was the fact that all four subjects were from the same teaching area, using the same core area of CSCOPE, English Language Arts (ELA). Data analysis involved, primarily the subjects' interviews themselves. A sub-area of data analysis was conducted with supporting documents that helped bring understating to the interviews. These included sample lesson plans, CSCOPE newsletters and professional communication from CSCOPE. Case study research involves "the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). In this case, the system was Texas public schools using CSCOPE. By analyzing the experiences of these teachers, the hope was to gain a deeper understanding

of the life experiences of these teachers being given to a new system after many years of teaching.

The participants in this study were very different, outside of the technical commonalties, and they presented very different interview styles. Frankie and Victoria talked in narratives, taking me with them to the very details. JB shared more of her personal reactions and teaching style. In the smallest school with the great diversity of teaching load she tried to give me a concept of this through anecdotes and opinions. Anne had less to say, likely by the nature of her position in an alternative school. Her situation did not lend itself as easily to the questions and so she discussed more the structure and impact of CSCAPE in general. I considered this a valid interview, however, because when districts adopt CSCAPE they adopt it for their alternative schools as well, which are often also staffed by experienced teachers, many of whom are operating more freely in decision-making about teaching by the nature of the structure and size of the schools. Anne was able to address this aspect of the issue.

The varying styles and personalities presented in these interviews make the study richer because of the nature of teachers being individuals. In analyzing experiences with a standardized system, this is crucial in seeing how one size may not fit all.

In doing analysis using the constant comparative, for each subject as well as the group as a whole I went through the varying steps to analyze their information. Conducting member checks occurred through the process. Much was done at the time of the interview by repeating what I believed I heard, or asking questions for clarification. In some cases I went back later to re-listen to the interviews that were recorded.



Additionally, as I began writing out the narratives, if I was unsure about anything from my notes of the interview, I would simply send an email to clarify or ask for a follow up. This made ensuring my data accuracy relatively simple.

Searching for emergent themes was the next step in analysis. I had each interview printed out, categorized by question. I would note where certain terms or words would recur in different subjects, especially where they would not necessarily be tied to CSCOE. Highlighting these areas soon began to reveal these emergent themes. After transcribing, translating and detailing by use of thick description the various cases and doing a within-case analysis, I then did a thematic analysis by doing a cross-case analysis (Creswell, 2007, p. 75) and searching for emergent themes from these interviews.

Three emergent themes appeared early on. After my second interview I began to mentally note two of them to see if they played out, and they did.

### ***Triangulation***

Triangulation helps to establish credibility by using multiple sources of data, including, time, person; methods, including observations, interviews and documents; investigators, single or multiple; theory, single versus multiple analysis perspectives (Erlandson, et. al., 1993). In order to use triangulation to establish credibility, I incorporated not only the interviews but the CSCOE resources, including the actual lesson plan to which one of these interviews referred extensively, other lesson plans and the online CSCOE system, to which an acquaintance in a CSCOE school gave me access, listserv and email updates that were official CSCOE correspondence, training

materials from CSCOPE districts which were posted on the Web, such as PowerPoint presentations, handouts and parent information sheets. I also consulted numerous Internet searches to see what teachers were saying in teacher discussion rooms on educational websites.

### ***Peer Debriefing***

The process of peer debriefing assists with credibility by allowing a peer who is a professional outside of the context, with a general understanding of the study to analyze materials, listen to the researcher's questions and concerns, and test hypotheses and emerging designs (Erlandson, et. al., 1993). In the case of this study, my primary peer debriefing occurred with the aid of my co-chair, Dr. Joyce Juntune, who could examine my findings objectively but knowledgeably. She is a current and active trainer of teachers in public school systems and works with curriculum, and she teaches future educators at Texas A&M University, as well. Thus, she was able to provide me with objective and professional feedback to help strengthen my study and cause me to think beyond what was in front of my face at times.

### **THE RESEARCHER**

Because of the nature of qualitative research, often it is important to understand the position of the researcher who, inevitably, brings ideas and opinions to the research that may impact the study.

I entered teaching in 1999, after completing my master's coursework in English. I was certified the traditional way with student teaching and I promptly obtained my dream job at the time, teaching middle school reading. I was in a small district, where I

taught almost every student in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Reading was a new course and, outside of the TEKS, there was no curriculum, no textbook, no guidelines and no other teacher. I learned to teach on my feet my first two years, doing both reading and English classes. I thought that was what teaching was—getting an assignment and figuring out how to do it. My next job was in a 5A school. This time I was teaching journalism. There was a textbook, but I was the only newspaper and broadcast teacher and was allowed to do what I wanted. My principal actually said to me he didn't care if I was dancing on the desk to teach a lesson if the students learned what they needed to as a result.

Then I moved to Los Angeles for a semester. I got a job in a well-regarded public school teaching freshman English. This was where I discovered a taste of prescribed curriculum. I taught a remedial reading block and it had a form and structure all its own. I had been sent to a week of training prior to this job to teach me how to teach this reading class, page by page, script upon script from their materials. My regular English classes were dictated to me down to the novel. Department meetings were contentious and weekly. I left at Christmas to move back to Texas, appreciating Texas schools. For all the TAAS to TAKS based problems I had thought existed, nothing showed me the decline of education as did the California school.

My next year was spent at a 5A district in suburban Houston. Here I found out that it was possible for an English teacher to be a professional and have structure. Teachers designed curriculum within departments. True camaraderie seemed to exist. While I only lived there a year, it probably spoiled me as to being a secondary public school educator because a transfer sent me to a 4A district in a 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom. The

children were a delight; the worksheets were not. Weekly, the department head brought in Shurly grammar worksheets. Stacks upon stacks cluttered my counters. Novels with worksheets. Everything became a worksheet. While it was not officially prescribed, it may as well have been. When no one was looking, I “recycled” the papers and taught my own lessons.

My last public school teaching job was at a 5A high school in the same district as the journalism job, but across town. I taught AP and IB English, and I found out in a low-performing school these advanced labels didn’t get me out of standard curriculum. Our team principal literally said one day “when I walk in Mrs. Smith’s room and she is on page 87, I should be able to walk in Mrs. Jones room and find her on page 87. Every teacher, same page, same day.” My mouth dropped to the floor and my inner rebel emerged. One day after returning from Christmas vacation, I tendered my resignation and by summer was at Texas A&M seeking to find a way to change the system that I perceived was standardizing itself to student’s demise.

I learned about CSCOE while I was teaching for a college near Texas A&M where I would do dual credit at a local high school which had adopted CSCOE. I had seen a poster-size TEKS-based CSCOE lesson plan on the teacher’s wall and asked her about CSCOE. She showed me a 30-page pre-printed lesson plan with a built-in script and shared with me the mandates and requirements she had been given. This teacher had taught about 30 years. It was clear she wasn’t staying longer. That was my introduction to this but I did not realize it was under a thrust to be state curriculum until I heard some more in various educational settings while in my Ph.D. program. As I searched for a

dissertation topic, I felt the need to know how this was affecting teachers. Was my reaction based on my own experience? Was the 30-year teacher typical or an anomaly? Clearly I set out with some feelings, but the truth is, the research left me feeling better about it than I expected. I was careful to let the subjects speak and answer open-ended questions without my telling them other things I knew or had heard or even my own feelings unless they asked me at the conclusion of the interview. I sought real answers. I found some surprises and I found some things I expected to find. Overall, I ended up with a better understanding not only of CSCOPE but of curriculum and standardization in general.

## **SUMMARY**

Seeking to truly understand what it was like to be an experienced teacher being given a prescribed curriculum, I set out to answer three predominate research questions: What is it like to be an experienced teacher in a school adopting the CSCOPE curriculum? 2) How do teachers using CSCOPE curriculum maintain the level of teaching diversity and professionalism that is needed to be an effective teacher? And 3) How do teachers using CSCOPE maintain their creativity while teaching as prescribed? Using qualitative research methods I conducted structured interviews, with a pre-planned interview protocol, and I did a document search to find more information on the curriculum.. To provide qualitative validation, I used member checks, peer debriefing, triangulation, information about the researcher's position in entering this study and thick description.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS (WITHIN-CASE ANALYSIS)**

Each participant in Chapter IV is a teacher of English in a Texas public school. While their assignments vary, each was teaching English at the secondary level at the time of the interview. Two were also teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and one also taught Sheltered English, in addition to regular and ESOL. Each section presented the information from each teacher in the following areas:

1. Background information on the grades, subject level, certifications, and experience.
2. Important and significant moments in their personal, as well as teaching histories, including highlights of their careers and why they like teaching.
3. Their views on the need for creativity as an educator.
4. Experiences with professional development, including but not limited to CSCOPE.
5. Their interactions, experiences and ideas as an experienced teacher who has now been mandated at some level to implement the CSCOPE curriculum within their classes.

## **SECTION I: FRANKIE**

Frankie's tough look and towering presence make you think she might not be compassionate teacher she obviously is. In her 29<sup>th</sup> year of teaching at the time of the interview, Frankie has spent her career in one district, teaching at a tough middle school and tougher high school, with a brief stint for two weeks at a less problematic school before being reassigned to high school.

Frankie is a tall woman, who lights up the room when she smiles and intimidates you when she doesn't. With dark, curly hair cascading down her shoulders and blue eyes that pierce into you, you have to know her to know she's as bold as a lion and gentle as a lamb. But she's not dumb. She works for a district that has taken a lot of flak and doesn't always protect its own. Thus, our meeting occurred when she had taken a personal day for a medical appointment, which she had before our meeting, and we met during the school day at a restaurant literally all the way across the city. She was that concerned about being spotted discussing the newest tool presented to teachers: CSCOPE. Speaking slowly and deliberately, she shares her life with CSCOPE.

### ***The Teaching Life***

In 1979, Frankie first entered a classroom on the north side of a medium sized northeast Texas city. She would stay for 25 years in that same school without a desire to leave. The school was primarily made of minorities. Frankie was born in a Panama, where she lived until she was 12 and raised by an American father and Panamanian mother, whose whole side of the family speaks Spanish. While English was her first language, her cultural background also helps her relate to students. She smiles as she

recalls the good rapport established with them, some of which continues to this day. Her desire to leave was not student-initiated but administratively-initiated. She was very happy in her position, even after a quarter century, when new leadership came in that she said “I could not live with.” For one who stayed in the same tough middle school for 25 years, clearly this statement is not based on a fickle dislike. Through the years, numerous trials and changes come to any teacher, but in Frankie’s case, until this particular leadership change, the joys had outweighed the frustrations. She put in for an in-district transfer, not stating the reason was leadership-based.

Certified in secondary English, secondary ESOL, all-level reading, and physical education, Frankie had many skills to offer, but basically just petitioned to move up to high school English which, with the exception of also coaching for about ten years, was her primary occupation. She liked coaching, she said, because it was a “great diversion” and a way to relate to kids outside the classroom.

Her transfer was accepted and she moved across town to the “other” high school. Of the two public schools in city limits, one had a tough reputation and was a direct feeder of the school at which Frankie had taught, while the other held a better community reputation and attracted teachers who were more willing to work there.

She lasted until Labor Day.

The official reason given her in a meeting that made her feel as if she had been called to the principal's office like a recalcitrant child, was that the numbers were down at her new school and the last to come was the first to go. She was transferred back across town to the high school where she had not applied to work, an offer she says was



more a way of them “allowing” her to keep her job. It was a real line of demarcation for her career, and a very difficult time. After 25 years of stability she had been tossed into the now-modern instability of a system she was not feeling too positively about at the time. She credits her strong faith with getting her through the personal trials and eventually she settled into teach and found her niche in ESOL after a year of teaching regular English.

At the time of this interview, Frankie is in her third year of teaching ESOL and is very happy with this assignment, which she finds most rewarding. She sees herself as being able to discover life with her students in many ways. She feels like the very nature of English, and especially for new language speakers, often new immigrants to the United States, gives her a potential for discovering the humanity of her students in ways a teacher of another subject might not be able to do.

Through journal entries and learning about their lives, she says, she can connect with them in personal ways. She hastens to add that she has no trouble drawing a professional line to not get too involved, but after many years in the classroom, she seemed pleased with her balance of the personal and professional and the way she can speak into the lives of students through their acquisition and development of language. “Because of the nature of the field, you get to know people as people,” she says.

She cites an example that occurred only one week before the interview as she was reading the journal entry of a girl in her class.

The month before one of her students, a 17-year old boy, had died of an illness. Many journal entries, understandably, reflected loss and grief. But this entry particularly

struck her. This student felt like the boy who had died was a brother to her. She wrote about how his death was still affecting her and said she was missing her brother.

Frankie's heart ached with the girl as she added that she didn't want to live—how could he be dead? Normally, classroom writing was an exercise that included a lot of lamenting since writing in a language one is learning is challenging. But Frankie noticed how this entry “just flowed from her.”

Frankie called her outside to talk to her because of the serious nature of the entry; she was deeply concerned about the comment about not wanting to live. The student had talked with a priest at her church about this, as well as her mother. The priest told her she needed professional help. Frankie felt honored and humbled that she could connect with a student on a level that mattered, that the student chose to write about this depth of pain to her teacher, trusting her told Frankie, yet again, that what she does has value and gives her value. “Those are the kinds of things that make me satisfied and content,” she says, commenting on the scenes from her teaching life that drive her on. In fact, she added, that the connections the students choose to make with her are a large part of her love for her job. Day by day, in what she called the “mundane” things, something will change. “All of a sudden, some sort of life rope comes out. You are able to help someone from another generation take another step have another day, have some hope to help somebody understand sensory details.”

These moments are what drive her as a teacher, connecting to the student professionally so she learns and personally so she grows.

### ***Creativity in Teaching***

Even after almost three decades of teaching, Frankie's need for creativity never lessens. Without hesitation, she says it is crucial in her teaching. The effective teacher is a creative teacher. Period. Her own creative style comes, more than anything, from and related to the lesson based on word pictures that she can develop to help the students understand. Again she returns to her faith to help her teaching. "The greatest example of the teacher for me was the Lord—he taught in parables. It was a strategy that worked for him and I really use them to help me help my kids. To derive word pictures that help them understand concepts," she says. She adds that this strategy really demands some creative thinking, and it necessitates that she spend a lot of time prewriting things that matches her lesson.

In order to do that she says, "I pray a lot. I read and do a lot of writing myself and practice with my own writing, concepts that will help. Whatever I am trying to teach I practice to take into my own writing—so I can show them my model, generated from my own creativity and show them how I finally came to my own camera." She will make transparencies of her own prewriting and creative products to show to the students, citing it as a sort of camera where she takes pictures and develops them for the students to see. She shows them her entire creative process to get the results she then asks them to produce. And if it doesn't work so well, she says, then she says they will move on, skip that for now and do something that works. Not obsessed with the method, Frankie strives to use whatever it takes to teach the lesson, to ensure the students have gotten the concepts mastered the TEKS and are demonstrating understating. Often then, she says,

she is forced to be creative on the spot. Thinking on her feet, there will be something she produces that she hopes will help the students finalize the product she is seeking.

Frankie is insistent on this creative modeling as a process of her teaching. “I want them to see my own process of what I go through—a person with an education—to get something someone can understand, clear message. I use a lot of modeling—sometimes I never know what is going to come out of me—and them—all the time.”

Another aspect to her creativity is in using real-world writing and communicating to reach students. She uses personal connections to teach the other things the TEKS require, as well. They often don’t have concepts or understanding for things such as modes of persuasion or organization for delivering a message. Frankie uses what she calls “the power of writing through windows of your senses.” She takes these lessons and tries to present them in a way that shows them that their reading and writing isn’t for school only, but is a key for them to develop as human beings and to contribute into other lives. “The kids I worked with will not only have a better future, but it’s helping their younger siblings and parents.” She is adamant about her mandate and says, “I take this mantle very seriously as far as helping them develop their language. It’s not just the students, but everything with relating to their family and community. Their thoughts have to be organized; they have to articulate.” She adds that in the case of her ESOL classes, all the academic aspects, whether they are reading, writing, grammar, or mechanics, present challenges not only as they might for you or me struggling in an English class in high school but also because these students, for the most part, are also trying to understand a new language. Many of them come to the United States without

education, or at least literacy. To Frankie, whether teaching her regular English classes or her ESOL classes, creativity is a non-negotiable. It's the way she teaches.

### ***Professional Development***

The size of Frankie's district has been somewhat of a boon to her professional development opportunities. Since it is a large district, there are many offerings and most of the time teachers are allowed some variance of choice in what they want to focus on, outside of typical mandated workshops, such as special education professional development, which all educators must have. Frankie says the district encourages the teachers to sign up to the workshops they desire, especially those which are related to their teaching areas, though sometimes they are forced to take some in those areas too. For example, all English teachers in the district take a TAKS workshop to help students pass the test.

Professional development also has some bargaining chips built in. The summer after our interview, Frankie was going to take a writing workshop to give her another full day off at Thanksgiving. They also were required to either do two summer workshop days or make them up on two Saturdays in September. Sometimes, she notes, there is really no choice in those areas.

Recently, Frankie's professional development choices have reflected the bulk of her teaching assignment, which is ESOL. She often chooses Spanish language and ESOL strategy workshops, which she enjoys.

The school at which she works, as well as the other local high school are on block scheduling, which means each day teachers are given a 1.5 hour conference

period, generally. Because of this, they sometimes have professional development built into half of their conference period, as the state only requires a 45 minute period per days. This particular term, they had professional development embedded on campus every Thursday with a weekly focus on special education. It began with Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training for every teacher. This, she says, was the result the semester before of administration demanding SIOP training for compliance issues, that teachers who taught SIOP needed to be trained in SIOP strategies. Numerous students who come to this school are Limited English Proficient (LEP), and this was seen as one way to bolster other teachers' methods to reach LEP students. Frankie adds that if all teachers in the school had SOP training then campus administrators "could more loosely just drop kids into certain teachers' classrooms and have that class be a SIOP class since that teacher had the training." The other high school does not have as many LEP students, but she says she heard that school would do it the next semester, "supposedly," she adds.

And then there was CSCOPE. Using CSCOPE seems to always begin with some professional development sessions, and that's how it was for Frankie; it was an entrance into a new world. How did CSCOPE help her in professional development? She offers perhaps the most revealing and ironic statement of the entire interview in her response. "The thing is I was already professionally developed before CSCOPE," she says, not missing a beat. "CSCOPE didn't really do anything for me professionally." If apathy is a greater insult than hate, CSCOPE has lost the round.

### ***Encountering CSCOPE***

Because of the size of the district and local news coverage, the foray into CSCOPE was public knowledge. The newspaper reported on the district purchasing the curriculum. It was presented as a summer professional development requirement, and that is how Frankie and CSCOPE became acquainted.

Initially, they were given computer training. Since CSCOPE is a fully computerized curriculum, this is a typical first professional development. They began in a summer session by undergoing training in how to use the program and navigate the materials available, as well as how to upload their own lesson plans onto the CSCOPE system. That initial training was one day long. At the time it was primarily an introduction to the program because the actual curriculum they were to use was not ready yet. Frankie says the objective seemed to be establishing their familiarity with the program; they didn't get to see much of it "because all of it was not finished."

She says the overall objective initially presented was to "get us all on same page" and she agrees with this to some extent. She says with students transferring in and out and from teacher to teacher, this is not a bad idea as far as general curriculum alignment. But as she went deeper into CSCOPE, she could not garner enthusiasm.

"When I saw what we had to deal with in first unit, my concern was that this isn't really going to do anything for our students; this isn't really going to help them with things they need from where they are to where we need to get them," she says.

In that first training they had not seen any material specific to their subject. The school year had actually begun before they were exposed to the individual units and

supplemental materials. And what Frankie saw was unimpressive to her. “What I have seen of CSCOPE is superficial, anything that an elementary student could handle. We can hand an activity from CSCOPE to the students, and they would be busy doing it and would produce a product. But at end, what’s the level in student growth?” She says it wouldn’t reflect any real growth of their ability but rather a measurement of their ability to fill in the blank and follow instructions.

“To me, it was deflating to see that package.” She acknowledges that clearly people have worked hard to develop CSCOPE activities but decries them as unrealistic, citing that the issues many at her campus deal with daily include students at the high school level with reading levels consistently 3-5 years behind their grade level. CSCOPE isn’t addressing these issues, she says. Instead, what seemed to be the bulk of activities were things such as drawing a picture or doing a graphic organizer. Frankie says the activities need to be more profound and contain more depth. What she sees from them is that they are designed to send students into a group to the side where they all copy the same answers and get a grade. There is no modeling, which she clearly believes is crucial to her own efficacy and creativity as a teacher because she has seen results for 29 years.

She cites the number of group assignments in her CSCOPE lessons which indicate the students should all participate in some way and yield a product and a group grade. “That might work at the adult level,” she says, “where people might own up to responsibility in groups, but there are other issues with 15 year olds. “ It’s not going to happen, she asserts. It’s simply not realistic that a class of 15 year old freshmen will



break into their groups, and Johnny will do A and Suzie will do B and Juan will do C and Tyrone will do D. Then all of them will come together with a perfect product-based on their individual work. “That doesn’t happen,” she says. “No matter how many times you spend making tracks across the room, it’s not going to happen.”

She returns to her mantra of independent thinking and development. To get students from point A to point B, Frankie says, they must be trained to be independent thinkers. They have to learn to assess information, use deductive or inductive reasoning, and develop other skills that strong thinkers possess.

While ideally most students start with words on a page and then proceed to learn the words, analyze the words and further develop their thoughts, Frankie sees in her classes, which have even included her regular classes, that the information on the page is beyond where many are. You and I may read it for understanding but her experience is that many don’t understand “these black little squiggly marks on the page” and that they are to bring something from that text and they make meaning.”

Her first effort is developing that, then continuing to analyze what is true or not true from that information. But in her classes, this is often an effort. What they perceive is that “they started at the upper right hand corner [and went] to the bottom right hand corner, and there was something saying something to them. They had no idea. They have to get to the point of what it is saying *to* how it applies to whatever situation.”

This process is one that cannot, in Frankie’s view, be standardized by some worksheets and scripted lessons. She may teach the grade and subject that is reflected on

her CSCOPE plans but if the reading is too high-level or the worksheets are too “copy and paste” then it is an ineffective tool for her instructional strategies.

### ***Reflecting on CSCOPE***

Still, CSCOPE is here. It’s a part of her everyday life now, so how does she perceive it after several months of use? When I asked her this she emulates a dramatic shudder and says “I think it’s my turn to go to the bathroom” After a wry laugh she simply adds, in summary that it’s “too contrived and superficial, assumes too much.” She explains her assertions.

In a regular level freshman English class, for example, she cited a recent assignment she saw as contrived because it forced students into an assignment that really did not have much value for them. This particular assignment asked students to identify six of their personal characteristics and then write a paragraph over them. The eventual outcome of the writing for that unit was a personal narrative in which they identify their characteristics and compare them with the characteristics of a role model. “I love starting the year off with personal narrative in regular English,” she says. “But I would also teach them writing process, cued writing, memories of childhood—finding an incident that they could write about. “ She says they *would* parallel it with literature, too, but to call this a personal narrative in which they write about personal characteristics as they lined up to the characters is not an authentic narrative. Indeed, the lesson actually asks for a comparisons and contrast of the student’s traits and the role model. She says that when students are forced into assignments that seem to be less profound when the potential for

those assignments could have contained much more depth, the result is that they are contrived.

She also supports her comments on the CSCOPE lessons being superficial. She says that in the group assignments there were tasks such as assigned roles within the group, such as the recorder, the task manager, etcetera. After being assigned those roles CSCOPE indicated a 20 minute period for the assignment within the group. What happened? “They would slap something down in 5 minutes and call it done, and, technically, by the directions for the assignment, they were done.” What resulted was a more or less running off top of their head, doing as little as they can do. “That’s the maturity level,” she says, not unkindly. The fact is 15 year olds in English class are not generally excited about assignments anyway. It is a natural response for many 15 year olds to do what the assignment asks, and that is all. CSCOPE, according to Frankie, makes this very possible.

A major issue driving Frankie’s criticism of CSCOPE and English curriculum is the assumptions the lessons make. Even in her regular freshman English class, Frankie points out that CSCOPE assumes students come in the door knowing how to read and are literate to a level they can grasp the opening of the units. English 1, Lesson 1 in CSCOPE that year presented a lesson over literature immediately. Frankie says this was the pattern the first 6 weeks. Students are given “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” to begin, and other stories in the freshman CSCOPE curriculum include “The Scarlet Ibis,” “The Necklace,” “The Cask of Amontillado,” and “The Most Dangerous Game,” and one more, six stories in six weeks. Frankie says she got through two. She began on track

with “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty,” but says it was an unrealistic story for her new freshman. Initially, the students could not decipher the reality from the fantasy in this classic story in which a man uses fantasy for escapism throughout the tale. They were stuck for a long time, she says, while the students learned how to tell ways in which to distinguish these things in reading literature. So she read it with the students in class, helping them determine where the shift in the text was that was the hint to the reader that it was shifting from reality to fantasy. This story contains five specific fantasies and in each one Frankie had to help the students see where those shifts take place and how to distinguish them. She ended up only adding “The Most Dangerous Game” to the first six weeks repertoire. And while she says there is some room in CSCOPE for teacher discretion, she found this very difficult to effectively implement, saying it was all but impossible to teach six short stories; it just couldn’t be fit in within the time allotted. She realized, through CSCOPE trial and error, that to do it well, she would, in the future, use two. She adds “I would have left off ‘The Secret Life of Walter Mitty’ had I discovered what it would do to the kids.”

CSCOPE also contains internal assessments so teachers generate their tests from the program, as well. Prior to CSCOPE implementation, the district has an internal benchmark system for TAKS testing which was given district-wide several times a year in each core area. CSCOPE assessments replaced the benchmarks. In Frankie’s case she compensated for the change in CSCOPE’s lessons by going into the test banks and checking off items she could test that were covered in the stories she had taught, trying to match concepts and terms with the stories, even though some content was supposed to

be from other stories. She considered the other stories, but could not make them work. Even if time had not been a fact, a story like “The Cask of Amontillado” was too tough of a read for student at the level she had. To plow on and teach it would have done a disservice to them.

Again, she notes that CSCOPE makes a lot of assumptions about students that are not realistic. While, ideally, they would be able to digest this literature at this level, they can’t. And a new lesson plan won’t make that happen until a lot of work is done in other arenas to assure they will enter freshman English ready. Ironically, she points out, perhaps the AP kids could do it, but CSCOPE is not written for AP curriculum, so the ones who could handle it will be the ones not getting it. The inherent ideas in the CSCOPE plans, constructing their own activities, coming up with focus, activities beyond just filling out the worksheet and handing it in, these would serve AP students well, she says; however, AP has a solid curriculum in place.

The bottom line, Frankie says, is that CSCOPE is “not realistic as a state curriculum.” She makes a comparison to the Industrial Revolution. She says there was a lot of talk that at beginning of the Industrial Revolution where educators wanted to set up classrooms to look like assembly lines, with all rows facing forward, and doing everything in a set order. Ultimately, it was determined that this type of classroom structure didn’t really help kids learn anything, Frankie says, and yet that is what CSCOPE is doing in the methodology area—taking a set in rows and saying this works for everybody. “It’s the same idea,” she says, “Deliver, pass to the front of the row, the teacher picks it up, go on to next thing—that is what this is.” She wonders, “Why don’t

they look back to what they have been griping about lately about all the desks in a row and learn from that?”

She concedes that CSCOPE could be helpful. “If you just got hired as a first year teacher, it would probably help,” she said. It could be a “lifeline for a novice, but [not for] someone who really knows kids and has been at it a while.” She says it simply misses the mark for students you have. It needs depth that is not in there. She says students do need to be able to work in groups and develop those skills, that the idea isn’t all wrong, but it can’t magically occur because it’s written in a lesson plan. There has to be respect enough to get something of value from group. Frankie knows it isn’t easy to get to that point, that when she started teaching, she obviously didn’t know what she knows now. She credits her master’s program with teaching her a lot of the skills she has. But she says a new teacher who is using CSCOPE with a veteran teacher coming alongside and helping, that could produce good teaching, but it doesn’t magically occur, and certainly not by repeating lessons that don’t take into consideration where the students are academically.

However, choices were not that easy to make initially, either, as some monitoring was occurring behind the scenes. CSCOPE’s system has the ability for administrators to monitor the progress of a teacher. This occurred at Frankie’s school and teachers were audited as to their progress. Ones found to be doing poorly at keeping up with lesson plans had that information sent to the director of secondary education who, in turn, went to campus administration and told to have their teachers catch up.

Frankie learned enough about the system to use it and stay under the radar, despite her internal modifications. “You open up CSCAPE, and you click on activities that are close enough to the ones you have used and just click. Just click on little box and submit. So I satisfactorily meet expectations of directors.” There is a place, she adds, to put in original stuff if you have time. “I haven’t yet.”

Another ironic twist is that one reason they didn’t do well with lesson plans, as it came close to TAKS time is that they were encouraged on their campus to let CSCAPE slide and do what needed to do to get the kids ready for TAKS even though “the sell [was] that CSCAPE prepared students for TAKS.” She emphasizes that the problem is not so much that the TAKS or CSCAPE isn’t asking of the right things but again, when they are, essentially, a-literate, non reader and writers, the first step has to be to get them to accept literacy as part of life. Simply, CSCAPE doesn’t meet them where they are. While she is teaching literacy, CSCAPE, in some places, would have her teach, for example, about, red herrings, logical fallacies, and glittering generalizations, which, again, is more what an AP level student would be able to handle, she says. Not wanting to sound cynical, she points out that the idea itself isn’t so bad:

We would like to have them all at the level where you can really interact; that’s the ideal—part of the dream of education, but the fact is, when districts are measured by test scores, things that have to be covered first before they enter a dream world. The measurement for our district is how did they do on the test. They didn’t care what the lesson plans were; they just wanted lesson plans.

Discussing ethics is easy for her. While it may seem unethical to tweak and choose, to look like you are doing a full lesson when you are only doing a part, Frankie says “sometimes you just get done what the boss tells you to get done.” She would find things she actually did relating to what was in the CSCOPE plan and made hers look like it satisfied it. It wasn’t the exact resource, she says, but it as the strategy. For Frankie, teaching students literacy and skills at the place they enter so they can leave at a higher level is what is ethical, not clicking the right buttons on a CSCOPE plan to meet the quota of a passing fancy.

### ***Paradigm Changes***

CSCOPE, touted as the key to raising achievement, would seem to have an impact on teachers and their teaching if that is the case, but Frankie says it hasn’t changed anything in her teaching paradigm. She acknowledges that her district bought CSCOPE to comply with certain district needs and to create a unified area of study in each grade level, and she can buy that. If they are to study short stories in the first six weeks, such as in these experiences, she says, fine, “but I venture into what I know from short stories and my students to make adjustments and adaptations as I see my kids and areas to cover as far as lessons and their development.” She says her lessons have been directed in that they have identified that a certain unit should study a certain area, but that won’t affect her methodology and strategies. She says she has learned, both from teaching and from earning her own degrees in education that you work with students, you don’t “just slap a thing in a paper” to teach students to be independent thinkers who can process and analyze information. That’s a goal she is trying to achieve daily and she



doesn't feel like "some little rinky dinky graphic organizer where they can list some traits about some character in a story" is going to do much to help achieve it.

All this aside, Frankie says she feels just as effective now as she did before CSCOPE was implemented. And she had her own take on what's really going on:

After you have learned your profession and seen the pendulum swing from side to side over periods of time, it seems constant that we get on one roller coaster and ride it to the end. We get our thrills and giggles out of it, and get our ooohs and ahs. Then we get on another one. What matters is that there is someone with concern for kids in the classroom. You show up consistently, with your heart and you go to work to help them understand because you are ultimately responsible for that field in their lives. You determine their needs because you *know* them, as individuals, not some script telling you what to do, but because you know them and effectively tailor lessons that will help them develop into thinking individually. *That's how you remain effective.*

Her strong feelings are from her years of teaching day in and day out while seeing things changed around her. She adds that if [students] know you are helping them, they respect you rather than "wipe regurgitation off their faces and leave with [no respect]."

Her opinion on how to deal with CSCOPE and other "fads" that enter teachers' classrooms is brusque but laden with wisdom:

[Students] can't help what they come to you with. If you take what you've got stop complaining about it, they start feeling good. The growth is exponential... I can learn... I can learn. And once they see that they start growing.

### *Summary*

Frankie is dedicated to teaching. With a master's degree, a sharp wit and a school that daily sees fighting and even violence, no one would blame her for leaving, but she truly feels a calling to her job and gives it her all. Seeing CSCOPE come in the door wasn't the highlight of 29 years of teaching by any means. She never teaches the same classes each year, or even semester. She has mixes of ESOL, SIOP, even regular. She is an eclectic teacher both in assignment and style. CSCOPE was not a professional boon to her career but a deflation revealing an empty and hollow shell when all was said and done.

Diversity in teaching is crucial with the varying populations she teaches. Frankie deals with culture and race as a part of her student population and strives to recognize each student with dignity while teaching at a professional level. She saw CSCOPE as a removal of that professionalism and diversity. It assumed all her 9<sup>th</sup> graders, for example, could read at a certain level and understanding a certain story. The way she maintains her professionalism is to revise the units so they reflect her students' needs.

Creativity for Frankie occurs in parables. Even in the use of CSCOPE she tried to incorporate stories, pictures that the students could see and relate to. A hindrance to this was the workload of CSCOPE, such as she mentioned with the first unit of six short stories in six weeks. She finally had to slow it down in order to be able to present to her students what they needed to understand the story and see things through the pictures she tries to impart to them.

After 29 years, you've seen it all. Frankie knows this could very well be a passing phase in education, and she says, basically, the way you deal with that is to show up, teach well and tailor lessons that reflect your students, not the school district or the state.

## **SECTION II- ANNE**

Often when we talk about alternative schools in education, we think of disciplinary alternative schools where those arrested or caught with drugs or fighting are sent to be separated from the community. Rarely do we talk about alternative schools with the same academic credibility that we do traditional school, but academic alternative schools are important aspects of education. Students come to academic alternative for various reasons which may include unavoidable things such an extended illness that has them falling behind and needing to catch up at a quicker pace, a move from another area that might also result in lost credits or educational gaps where the student still want to graduate on time. Sometime students who get pregnant or know they will have to get a job to help support their family and will not likely graduate on time will also apply to transfer to academic alternative schools. These schools tend to provide students with an opportunity to work at their own pace, yet they are staffed by certified teachers who are as qualified as teachers in any school in the state. The requirements are the same.

### ***The Teaching Life***

Anne is a teacher who was in her 16<sup>th</sup> year at the time of her interview and had spent all 16 years in an academic alternative school by choice. For her it is the ideal

teaching situation for many reasons. Certified in secondary English, Anne teaches all levels of high school English, including communications applications and journalism, at an academic alternative school in a 3A district in Central Texas, and she has no desire to be in a traditional classroom. She is a no-nonsense woman who speaks with confidence and without letting emotion get in the way. It's clear she knows what she thinks and doesn't have to ask other people to help her form opinions. Not cocky, but confident, she has seen results in her 16 years at this school.

Anne and a good friend went back to school together many years ago. When the alternative school opened for the high school, as opposed to the previously elementary-only campus, Anne and her friend started at the school and have stayed, still teaching together, Anne in English and her friend in history. Anne's degree is in English with a minor in reading, and the year before the interview she had earned her master's in education as well.

The school holds a maximum of 40 students with approximately 13-15 in any class at one time, which generally lends itself to one-on-one instruction. Because of the small class sizes, Anne says it's "like a little family and you're the momma." She is pleased with their "fabulous" TAKS passing rates, as well. She said that even those who came to the school having failed TAKS one or more times pass in the educational context of the academic alternative school.

Much of this is because of the intimate educational environment she works in each day. She *is* the English department at her school. With only four teachers, one for each core area, each one is more empowered to make decisions and educate directly

without the overhead issue that might come with a larger institution. “It’s like I’m my own boss,” she says. One reason she loves this teaching environment is the incredible opportunity she has to directly help students. “I like helping kids that just haven’t gotten it somewhere along way and suddenly say ‘no one ever told me that’ as they get it,” she says. As a teacher, the opportunity to see direct results like this is a key factor in teaching efficacy and drive. As a close-knit community where teachers get along well, Anne enjoys both her professional atmosphere and her professional impact of seeing students grow, learn, graduate and succeed, often as direct result of one-on-one interaction.

### ***Creativity in Teaching***

If creativity has a place in traditional education, then it can be exponentially more vital in alternative education. For Anne, creativity is integrated with her everyday teaching life. “If it’s not creative in some way you’re going to lose them,” she says. Many students who enter an alternative school have heard the lessons, taken the class, done the work to some point, and then they re-enter. For most students you can’t just say “Here’s the book read chapter 5,” Anne says. “I realize lots don’t like artsy stuff and would rather just read and test,” she adds. To Anne, her job is knowing the key and making it work for the individual student. She says she has to “know and understand students and know their learning styles so [I can] individualize for them. We change up things and we have this freedom.” In an alternative school setting, creativity is what can make or break a student’s success, and Anne knows and embraces this in her teaching.

### ***Professional Development***

If there is a professional downside to working in an academic alternative school, it might be the professional development. The independent nature of the school doesn't always allow for the same workshops and training one might obtain in a traditional setting. Anne says she can't recall the last professional development session she attended that was connected to English or literature, and yet that is her teaching field. "It would be nice to catch up on things," she says.

She has felt supported with some very useful professional development sessions in two other areas, technology and alternative schools. She says that almost all of the workshops for technology have been very helpful, though they have slowed down on the requirements in the past five years or so. "When we need anything," she says, about learning technology, "we ask the students."

The school staff also attends an annual convention for staffs of alternative schools where they have training in other academic areas such as discipline and motivational strategies and differentiated learning. By far, she says, the most helpful professional development she has had comes from her fellow colleagues in informal session. "What was most helpful is when we get with other alternative schools in an informal association with other faculty members and broke out into groups by department" Anne says. In these groups, they would share specific problems and ask for advice from other professionals on issues such as what to do to cover the TEKS in a specific area. She says they would all take notes, get ideas and learned from the "This is how I do it" mode. "It was a great opportunity," she says. "It was fabulous to share

ideas, to pump new vitality into curriculum.” It also led to changes of how and what she was teaching as she learned from others. “Every 3-4 years, I change up something,” she says. And it’s easy to see why this setting could be so ideal for a professional teacher, having the freedom and creativity to make changes and see direct results can only be good for both teacher efficacy and student success.

Then there was CSCOPE.

Professional development with CSCOPE broke all these rules. “It was not helpful in the beginning. It wasn’t all online [yet], so you could not find certain things.” She says the problem initially was that they would “get training for something you can’t use right away... which was typical.” Now, she says, it’s a bit better. “They have simplified things; the web page is different –better than what it was.” But initially, the foray into CSCOPE’s professional development was not a winning point. “I don’t think they were really ready,” Anne says, referring primarily to how CSCOPE is an online curriculum tool but they were receiving training for something not all online to let them learn. “They should not start before ready. That’s a business principle.”

### ***Encountering CSCOPE***

Meeting CSCOPE sometimes feels like encountering a stranger in a dark alley after an otherwise pleasant day. For Anne, this encounter came early in CSCOPE’s life, she estimates around 2007, and came in the form of a person from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). She adds that the “district administration had already bought into it.” Initially, CSCOPE came with a mandatory implementation order to be followed “by the book,” she said. “They told us we *will* be using this. It is vertically and horizontally

aligned....” She says, essentially, they were “trying to sound wonderful.” She adds, matter-of-factly, “It would have been better if it had been presented in different manner.”

Some aspects of it were good on one sense, she said. They had heard that the curriculum alignment was a positive element because it would cut out some of the reteaching at the beginning of the year because under this alignment each grade would know “what you were supposed to be getting the year before.”

But the introduction in person was more awkward than a badly planned blind date. When the lady from TEA arrived some from Anne’s campus asked how they were going to implement this at the alternative school. The response ended any chance of romance. “She looked at us and said, ‘Oh! How *are* you going to do it?’ So right off the bat I don’t think it was intended to be used in alternative school setting.” But, of course, they were mandated to use it in one anyway.

Its use didn’t stay long on the alternative campus, however. “As the years have gone by, we have been saying *no way, we’re not doing it.*” And it’s worked, she says. CSCOPE does not work in alternative school setting. “We don’t do regular classroom teaching. We have packets of work that are partly from text, and other sources. We try to do hands-on, individualized things like videos, DVDs, listening to things, computer work, to make it more interesting and to retain information.” But, she adds, each alternative school classroom works at its own rate of speed, and quite individually. Teacher-created curriculum is actually what makes this setting work. The message they sent was “everything on the same page at the same time doesn’t work for us.” And the



administration finally acquiesced with a sort of, “Do the best you can do and try to incorporate as much of CSCOPE as you can into up your curriculum.”

Anne’s students are coming to her from the local high school, so they have been using CSCOPE there when they get to the alternative school. When they come in halfway through the year, the goal is to get done. “We need to follow scope and sequence... so if they do *Julius Caesar* in CSCOPE, they can do the exact same things but with a different literary work.” CSCOPE does say that the literature can be different based on the discretion of the district, and the district allows departmental approval of different works. So, Anne says, she goes through CSCOPE. “We have *huge* notebooks,” she adds. But she goes through and looks at what they are using and what teaching modules she can pull out, such as, short stories and characterization. But she doesn’t split hairs. “If I don’t have access to it, I just use something else. If I don’t like drama, I use something else.” She also notes that some of CSCOPE’S worksheets and graphic organizers she will use, but says “no way can we do what CSCOPE says. It doesn’t fit the alternative setting.”

### ***Reflecting on CSCOPE***

Anne says she has really gone through CSCOPE for high school English Language Arts as she sees what to pull and use and concedes that there are a “lot of good things in there. *In* theory, it’s really good. It just doesn’t always work. It depends on the kids. Some are eager, some are ready to learn.” But she notes that there are also some who don’t care as much, who are a challenge to get to participate at all. “There are so many different kinds of learners out there. Kids who *hate* group work, shy kids who

can't stand getting in front of class. [CSCOPE has] a lot that really won't work in a realistic classroom.

For a new teacher, Anne says, she might view CSCOPE differently. "It seems like it would be easy to walk right into. They even give you a suggestion of what to say in the classroom, but for the majority of seasoned teachers—for administration to come in and say you can't use what you have done for years and be successful with it, it's mandatory..." she trails off.

"CSCOPE is a bad word," Anne says. In the local town they have heard teachers griping about it so much that it's sort of met public opinion demise, regardless. "It would have gone over better had administration pulled in teachers who they knew would through a fit [about the mandate to implement CSCOPE] and talked to them." It was all in the approach, she said. And the bottom line: "It was not presented in very professional manner." As a result, she adds, she knows a lot of teachers at the regular high school are not using it or using to full extent.

"They have raised the bar," she says of CSCOPE's intent. "That's not bad, but these kids could never do that." She isn't being negative. She says that they want the level pushed up, but the way CSCOPE has pushed it is "way above" what the average student could do at this point. At her campus, they see many students who are at-risk or who have failed, and while she says most average students even can be successful, this isn't the way to make them that way.

Her takeaway view of CSCOPE is that it's "middle of the road—not horrible but not fabulous. It's just good." She cites the alignment, for example and says she may use

75% of that aspect, but the whole of CSCAPE isn't going to happen in Anne's classroom.

### ***Paradigm Changes***

A paradigm shift occurs when someone's way of seeing something changes and he or she forms new ideas and views as a result. In Anne's case, there has been no paradigm shift with the implementation of CSCAPE, even at the end of her second year with it. After 16 years, she says, "I have things that I know work." And in her case, feedback from the students, test scores and success rates prove her out. The question is, why would you want to shift a paradigm that isn't broken?

### ***Summary***

Anne reacts to CSCAPE more like someone who once knew someone and says hello while passing in the mall. She doesn't give it much credibility and feels that it was never designed for an academic alternative school anyway. While she was initially told they would use it without modification, she knew she could not do it in her classroom. Instead she used the scope and sequence and went on to pull what she could, things such as graphic organizers, to use with her students from the CSCAPE curriculum, but otherwise didn't do much with it.

Daily life in Anne's school involved being a professional who maintains diversity. With up to 40 students at a time coming in and out of a transitory school, her life changes from day to day. To maintain what she must do, she relies not on CSCAPE but on what she has seen work for years—individualized education where she helps tailor the lesson to the students' needs and give them what they need to be successful.

Creativity is probably more important in a school for students who get a second chance, she says. If students have heard the lesson idea before and perhaps even flunked out of the class, Anne has to find new and creative ways to present it so that it can take on meaning to them.

Anne's life has not been altered much by CSCAPE's implementation. For her it's a scope and sequence with a few graphic organizers, but hardly a tool to revolutionize education.

### **SECTION III-JB**

One of the best-kept secrets in education might be 1A schools. Teachers sometimes teach all students in entire secondary classes. As a result, education can become more individualized and personalized, even in a traditional context. In 1A schools at their best, teachers and students become coworkers in a quest for a goal. And sometimes the results can be win-win.

In a rural north Texas, town, at a 1A school, JB daily impacts students from grades 6-12. With red, tossed hair and a raspy voice contrasting her average-sized frame, she looks like the kind of "momma bear" you would want in the room with your struggling kids. At the time of her interview she was teaching 6-12 grade English, reading, and ESOL. Specifically, at the time of CSCAPE implementation the classes she was responsible to teach included: junior high English, reading and ESOL, as well as high school English and ESOL, as well as English 4, regular. Besides being certified in secondary English and ESOL, she is also certified in reading 4-8.

In her 8<sup>th</sup> year of teaching at the time of the interview, JB had been at the same district since moving to Texas. Educated and certified initially in a Midwestern state, JB took the Praxis or certification, and felt well-prepared with challenging classes. Moving right after that, she found Texas did not accept the Praxis and had to retest with the ExCET. She began at her current district in 2001 and has remained since. It was her first position as a teacher.

### ***The Teaching Life***

The challenge of a small school may be in the various preparations involved for the teachers who have to staff more classes, but JB wouldn't have it any other way. Her voice breaking a bit already she says "I am a fortunate teacher in that my kids love me; they love me, and that's been very obvious twice in my career." The first was a personal loss, when her son, a 19-year old graduate of the district in which she is currently employed passed away, she found out that her students were rallying around her like her own family. When she had to take off work for a while, she says, "they called, wrote me letters, came by to see me." And when she went back to work she was met with great understanding from her students." If I started crying or couldn't teach that day, it was okay. They went ahead on their own." She says she could not ask for better students. Referring to this period of tragedy, JB, who was teaching Spanish, says, "Even though I was not teaching Spanish 2 at the time, I was teaching something more important: the value that life goes on; when tragedy hits you, work through it. You do what you have to do."

The love she feels from her students continued even the year before this interview when JB was diagnosed with a couple illnesses that made it difficult to work. Once again, she demonstrated to them that you work through it and do the best you can. “The students are wonderful; they cry when I do.”

JB didn’t enter education as a 20-something because she married out of high school and had her children first. Instead, she went back later in life, after being a mom and having a day care. She naturally assumed that elementary education was her place in the academic world because of the day care and her love for children, but a wise education professor changed her mind. “He said, ‘you don’t want to teach elementary; you want to teach high school,’” she says. He was right, it turns out. She switched to secondary.

She loves it, still. She uses the word *love* a lot in our interview, always referring to her students, and never sounding anything but sincere and grateful for them. She’s not talking about a good book or a song, but about genuine love for the people she encounters daily. She is in teaching “because I love them and they love me.”

It didn’t start as pure, she says. At first, she says, it was very “opportunistic, but once I got into it, it changed a lot to more what focused on the student than it being advantageous for me. The schooling made me not be self-centered in what was gratifying to me and making my life easier. It showed me the importance of educating students for their betterment not just mine.” This “double good” as she calls it, was a wonderful gift to her that she seems to have never lost sight of in her years of teaching.

Because of the small school and classes, she says, “fortunately, I see the kids learn something almost every day.” She sees them at age 18 learn something in English they may never have learned and it’s a real joy to her to see continued growth.

She calls herself a “traditional teacher.” She explains that though:

[M]y room is chaos to someone looking, if you will stand back and watch what is going on: peer tutoring, individual and group work, peer and teacher instruction, mentoring—they are all there. You just have to step back and wait and watch. I am not a good person at following the rules... I do not like all the time it takes to prepare lesson plan, I know what my kids need and I know what to do to with them.

### ***Creativity in Teaching***

Teaching virtually every secondary student in a district lends itself to creativity if one is to be a success, and creativity matters a lot to JB. “If you don’t have creativity, you cannot be a good teacher. You have to be flexible have creativity and desire to give every student what they need,” she says. “I do so many different things. I never know what a day or class will bring.”

Creativity might mean that she walks in with one plan for her classes and the situation in the class or even with situations occurring in their lives, she adjusts suddenly. This is tantamount, she says, in that “you have to *know* your kids inside and out at home, at school, so you can hit those keys learning times, so you can nail them—because the next day you might not get anything out of it at all.”

Learning to read her students with such discernment is more necessary, she says, because they have very little family support in this rural area. “At 13 or 14, their parents want them working, making money. They don’t care if they are in school. They send them only because the law requires it.” JB says this means she needs to work very hard in forming in her students the importance of an education, of being a self-learner and being proud of learning, rather than just sitting there doing nothing because they have to attend. “Sometimes I do it in fairly strange ways,” she adds.

Her strange ways include all sorts of methods. She says she is a “big jokester” using various double-meanings and innocent puns. At first, she says. They don’t know how to take it or what it means, but they get it and learn. And, she adds, “that’s a hard concept to teach.”

“I use child psychology. I’m not above bribing kids,” she says, but adds, “not a lot, but competitively” She says things like “I can’t believe you are letting so and so beat you....” They know she means it in fun, not as a true commentary on their loss, and this, she says, is the result of her relationship with them. It also spurs them on to try harder. Competition is a part of life to some degree, so by learning it in a safe environment with someone who loves them it teaches them life and drives them to learn their lessons.

### ***Professional Development***

Being in a 1A district, the professional development offerings are not as numerous as they might be in larger cities with more resources. And for JB, that’s been the case. “I’ve had to do these professional development workshops,” she says with a wry twist of her mouth, “but I don’t know that I can say they have been that helpful.”



She makes an exception for technology workshops, though. “I used to be technologically illiterate—stupid, old, whatever you want to say, but I’ve actually learned how to do quite a bit with the computer” she says, “because they made me.” “I fought that too.”

A memorable professional development session for her occurred before she took her ESOL test. She says she learned a lot about things like how important manipulative were in teaching language learners, things she did not know because they were typically used in elementary classrooms. She also learned a lot about how to teach vocabulary since she had not taught it at the lower levels. “That probably was the most learning I ever received from having to go to professional development,” she proclaims.

Otherwise, she doesn’t rave much. She uses says they are, for the most part, “Redundant. Boring. Or something that I would never use because it doesn’t fit my kids or me.” Most of her professional development mandates are connected with the subjects she teaches.

A conflict JB has had in Texas with professional development comes as a result of her being educated in another state’s system, she says because much of the professional development she has been made to attend here was actually in her degree program in the state in which she went to school. “I was taught such higher level skills and high-level expectations, and how to teach at so much more of a high level than I could ever begin to teach at the school I am in. Unfortunately I did have to lower my expectations,” she says. She adds that it’s not that she watered it down to a level that was useless, but she lowered it down to a level they could understand and succeed. “I did still

challenge, but not to the degree I had been taught to teach. So when I go to these professional developments [here], they are still just teaching me to dummy it down.”

While she did not teach in the schools in her former state, that was where her own kids were primarily educated. They had a rigorous state exam, known nationwide, and had to have a more advanced education to pass it, JB says she says “My son came down here as a freshman and graduated as the valedictorian. He was three years ahead of the other kids. He was bored out of his skull.” However, she adds, where they were he may have been lucky enough to be in the top 30, but would not have been the valedictorian.

### ***Encountering CSCOPE***

Encountering a new curriculum probably helps if you want one. But JB, knowing her students and seeing success, met CSCOPE as a person not in need of a new friend. “I have a huge tool belt, and I don’t need a curriculum,” she says. “*Supposedly* our school began using CSCOPE using two or three years ago,” she adds, explaining that it seemed the curriculum director was going to trainings and “supposedly incorporated [CSCOPE] into our school—but we weren’t [doing it].” But then it came the next year. “In the fall of last year is when they just threw this stuff at us and said ‘you will do this; you have no choice.’”

But JB did have a choice in her mind because “it can’t tell me what to do with seven levels [of classes]. Even the English 4 students can’t do on-level work.” Instead she did what she knew to do for her students, “I was able to adjust the work and time

spent on projects and readings to have more development from [students] rather than having to read this in two weeks,” she says, referring to the timelines CSCOPE suggests.

The official introduction to CSCOPE came in a week-long professional development before school began where “they shoved CSCOPE down our throats.” She says they announced “We’ve been doing this for a year,” referring to how the curriculum director had been in some trainings and apparently trying to implement CSCOPE ideas, “but we haven’t done it but now we are doing it full blown.” One factor to that confusion may have been the fact that JB teaches in a school district in which every school had adopted CSCOPE and it sounded like it came with a mandate that was simply a blanket issue to them all.

A representative from the local education service center came to train them. JB quickly discovered that CSCOPE’s English language arts was the “weakest section” with not enough variety for teachers to choose from to cover the TEKS they needed to teach. Some of the units that are in CSCOPE are not measured with any level of equivalent on the TAKS test. JB points out that on the TAKS test for freshman, media is one page with 4 questions to go with the picture used on the test. But in CSCOPE it was a 12-week unit. Or there was the fact that the unit for *Romeo and Juliet* was timed to run the three weeks before the TAKS test. Meanwhile, she says, sophomores do *Julius Caesar* from beginning to end in seven days. “So *Julius Caesar* is seven days and media is 12 weeks.” And she adds that there is “very, very little writing is in CSCOPE units. Usually there are small writing assignments at end of lesson or of a unit. But there is not incorporated any time to write the long essays they need for TAKS.” She says CSCOPE units did

offer a few opportunities to do open ended questions, “but not near as much as what kids need to help them to understand how to actively quote from stories.” She said the teachers basically had to design those lessons themselves.

She notes that a freshman English teacher colleague attempted to use it perfectly the first year but “tossed it this year. He was frustrated with 12 weeks media and *Romeo and Juliet* before the TAKS.” And instead of teaching media the way CSCOPE says, he would do things such as teach stereotyping in a way student could understand; for instance, he would ask, “What stereotypical group is this magazine cover trying to address?” JB says that to know that, students would have to grasp what stereotypical racism, and groups are found in literature. “They weren’t really covered except talking about reading a book about this black kid and tell why it’s racist. That’s old school. We don’t do that anymore—these kids don’t care about that.”

So while CSCOPE has eased in, at first under the radar, it has not done well for JB, and apparently in her ranks because it simply doesn’t make sense for her to do.

### ***Reflecting on CSCOPE***

For JB, CSCOPE has not been worth the effort invested. “I have no curriculum in CSCOPE. They have no SOL [curriculum] for my kids. They don’t have anything” In a class she may have 3 6<sup>th</sup> graders and 3 7<sup>th</sup> graders, and 2 8<sup>th</sup> graders, so she would try to go into CSCOPE and pull lessons from various grades and write her lesson plans. Other teachers were happy to explain and show exactly how they are doing it to satisfy the administration, since they were accountable to show its use. “I just looked at them and said ‘I’m not doing it because I can’t. I have too many different levels of kids.’ They ask

me to use CSCAPE when I can. They understand I have to do so much modifying with anything that I can't use all the time."

"I have been told if they get units for ELL or SOL, that I will be asked to use them more because they will be more developed for the needs of my kids. We'll see when they come out, now that we have the new TEKS coming out this summer, they have already told us we won't have new units till next summer." She says some units and lessons are adaptable for different levels. So same lesson but new TEKS

"When you print out a lesson, it's like 100 pages. It's crazy."

Another issue she has had with CSCAPE is inconsistency of what the lessons teach versus what shows up on tests. For example, the lesson might call for *Romeo and Juliet* (3 weeks) and reading a story of some kind and then talking about story analysis (3 weeks), but the test for that unit might be about vocabulary on grade level, media, writing persuasive or informative essays, or author purpose. "The six-week tests do *not* relate to anything in unit. Absolutely nothing to do with what you've done those six weeks," she says, adding, "I don't give those tests because some of the stuff they ask are not taught in the six weeks."

She says sometimes she may have a test for freshmen but the material is taught at the junior level, something she questioned. Her answer was explained by a representative from the education service center, who told her that the different concepts, lesson plans related to the TEKS are developed by different teachers throughout state of Texas and combined into the CSCAPE curriculum. For example, a Region 6 teacher may write a lesson and a Region 7 teacher another lesson and a Region 13 teacher another

lesson and they become the curriculum, but the end test is pre-standardized to follow TEKS but not the units taught each six weeks. This created a problem with junior high teachers who tried, she says, to follow it as much as possible, but the six-week assessments became a problem. They would go through them and if it was a 50-question test, perhaps mark out 12 questions to reflect what was actually taught, and then base percentages and scores filed with administration on those 38 questions.

JB has a unique teaching situation. Her classroom is in the old elementary school library and sitting in a glass office in there is the district curriculum director's office. Literally, every day, her boss, in a sense, watched her teach. And that's been a help because the curriculum director has cut her a lot of slack in using CSCOPE and said "JB, you're different; you're like the life skills class. You're class is unique. You're teaching what they kids need not teaching what CSCOPE says you have to teach. "

While the regular classes have to teach CSCOPE, they have had a bit of flexibility, she says. The district and the education service center have "allowed us to adjust stuff to better fit the classroom." She says they say if you have a lesson that teaches the same concepts that you think is better, by all means, they may do it. But they have no flexibility on following the scope and sequence, the Instructional Focus Documents (IFD) and concepts in order, and Vertical Alignment Document (VAD). Still, she says, they don't follow the six weeks, and, therefore, the semester. JB says that from their calculations in English, and even people from the education service center, about 60% of TAKS is covered, which is not enough for kids to pass. "That's why it is the weakest link," she says.

Being in a small school teachers hear other teachers talking too. She says the higher level science teachers tell her there is chemistry and physics are not effectively covered by CSCOPE, but that IPC and biology are actually met with a more positive reaction. “IPC and biology are good, but past that it’s crap.”

At her district, all housed close together, the elementary and junior high principals seem to be in support of continuing on CSCOPE, but, she says, the high school principal is not convinced it’s working because there’s not as much in the high school level. “There’s not as much time and effort seems to be put into units at higher levels; it’s very obvious,” she says.

One positive, she says, has been curriculum alignment because they all know exactly what they are required and expected to teach in the school year. “It’s written in front of us, and we know that’s what we have to teach. It’s nice to have that. They did that for us. That was nice.” The rest she can’t garner enthusiasm about at all. She says it seems to be worse the higher up you go, that the elementary curriculum seems to be more solid and complete, but as it reaches junior high and high school it’s been challenging. “I know that 90 percent of teachers are frustrated with it because it’s either not working as far as the kids not learning or it’s not covering everything they think needs to be covered. It’s very strict in allotted time—and as a teacher you have to be flexible because have you have to allow time to reteach and slow down for understanding and there’s none of that time built in CSCOPE,” she says.

However, she adds, the principal, curriculum director, and region service center are realizing their frustrations on campus and looking at how to fix it. They were going

through new training on the new English language arts TEKS to try and help teachers work with them. TEA introduced new TEKS the 2009-2010 school year; however, CSCOPE will not have a new ELA curriculum until the 2010-2011 school year, when the students are actually tested on the new ELA TEKS.

Still, the frustration sometimes is difficult:

We're certified teachers—we *know how* to teach. You don't have to spoon feed to us. We're highly educated people. So I don't understand why the region, or whoever is doing all this, thinks they need to set our curriculum out for us... this two weeks, that 2 weeks, this 3 weeks, etcetera, etcetera, this is what you do for the year. I understand they think it's going to help TAKS scores. As a teacher I am game. I tried it—it didn't work, so my stubbornness comes out and I say I am not doing it—it's not working. I know my kids. And it's not working. And my curriculum director and principal and superintendent love me so I get away with a lot.

She says her curriculum director said to her, "Don't worry about it—you're doing your job. Don't worry about this CSCOPE stuff, you're kids are leaning and your TAKS scores are up." So, she confesses:

I haven't even opened it this year—well, I opened it at the beginning of the year—pulled out a couple lessons, and shut it down and haven't been back since. But I can do that because I am special in that my classes are so unique. And, for crying out loud, when my curriculum director is watching me every day from 8-3:30, if I was not teaching, she wouldn't have me working there—I have a



member of administration in my room all the time. My kids are learning. They're testing often enough--Reading SRI, TELPAS. All long as the scores are up, it shows I am doing my job. . My test results last year has the highest level of Hispanic students passing. So I get to throw that in their face when that tell me something; look at my test scores; I've had more kids pass than anyone else. I am teaching I am doing my job

### ***Paradigm Changes***

JB loves her job and grows with it, but CSCAPE hasn't been a part of her growth. "It hasn't done anything. Not in my situation," she says. "It's one of those new 'things' that is going to solve *all* our problems. And when try it and it still doesn't work, it's just another thing we have to go throw and something else will be in its place." She doesn't seem angry about it. She seems sure. She knows those seven grade levels of students who enter her room 180 days a year, and she knows that CSCAPE isn't their answer.

"I do not recommend a school district to take on CSCAPE," she says. "That's what they are doing to our teachers—they are saying you can't think anymore honey. You gotta teach it like *that*."

Then she asks an ironic question: "Where's *my* professionalism?" she asks. "If they are going to do something like this, you could take someone right off the street and have them do it. They don't need to go through four years of education. You don't know how to teach just to do this."

For JB, knowing her students and what works for them to teach them the most is her bottom line. “They don’t have any models the way I model in my class. I might teach a vocabulary word for *dance*—I don’t say a word... I get up and (makes dancing motions in interview). They don’t forget that. Or, she says, when she taught the word *urge*. The students said “Miss? What is urge? Her response: “Oh I have the urge to go poo.” Then they got it.

“That’s not in CSCAPE.”

### ***Summary***

For JB, CSCAPE has been a burden more than a help. As a woman responsible for 6-12 grades in so many areas of reading, ESOL and even regular English 4, she finds it impossible to integrate the curriculum into her classroom in any way that works. Initially she tried to combine lessons from the system and make something emerge that was workable, but with ESOL there was no CSCAPE to match that anyway. It was far more cumbersome for her to put aside her lessons and then go into a system not designed for her and take lessons out while picking and choosing what may work. JB loves her job and her students and CSCAPE has been more of an intrusion into her life as an experienced teacher than it has helped.

Professionally she is fortunate to have administrators who see her reasoning and allow her latitude to simply use CSCAPE’s scope and sequence. For her this is the best way for her to maintain professionalism and diversity. Her classes are diverse. With many poor English language learners spread across seven levels, JB relies on her experience and her knowledge of her students to do what she knows is the best for them.

In some cases she may have the same students from 6-12 grades, so she knows those students better than a script can guide her to teach them, and that's what she does.

Maintaining creativity is what matters to JB, who described her classroom as “chaotic,” but not in a negative way. She using manipulatives, motions, dances and whatever else she needs to get the point across to students. She relies on her creative skills to reach students who have often been raised to want to drop out of school to work. Her creativity might be the value of their education. And like she points out in describing teaching the meaning of the word *urge* by explaining “I have an urge to go poo”—that's not in CSCOPE.

JB Feels like CSCOPE's scope and sequence are useful tools, but she isn't hopeful about the rest. Even though she has been told ESOL will exist at some point, she isn't sure whether to buy into that being any better. Her regular 12<sup>th</sup> graders can't do what CSCOPE asks so she has not held out a lot of hope the rest will.

#### **SECTION IV-VICTORIA**

With a wardrobe filled with school colors and the cute little mascot, Victoria is the very picture of school spirit. She updates volleyball playoff scores from her cell phone to her Facebook so everyone following can know what a marvelous job the school is doing; even if they lose the game, she has only words of praise. She may have been teaching 25 years, but cynicism has not reared its ugly head. More than half of her time in education has been spent in her current district, where she arrived in 1996. With her family nearby, it was a good place for her to raise her own children. But she has taught in several schools throughout Texas. About a decade of her other experiences was split

between four highly-ranked schools in three large districts in a major metropolitan area of Texas, as well as one other stint in a small school. In her 14<sup>th</sup> year at her current 2A campus, she is as happy as she has ever been, teaching English (2 Pre-AP English 2, 3 English, 1 and one on-level English 2). She is secondary certified in English and journalism and has taught high school, primarily 9-10 grades, her entire career.

### ***The Teaching Life***

My interview with Victoria occurred a week after one of those teaching moments every teacher hopes to have. It came “on the heels of a really bad day, where I did not feel like students grasped at all what I was trying to teach.” And then she met up with a former student, one whom she had taught her first year in this district. This student happens to be a literal rock star in Europe, one who could not go out in public without being recognized. This student “told me that she will always remember my class and passion for poetry, and every time she writes a song, she thinks about that.” This famous woman who has people screaming for her still remembers her English teacher from 14 years ago. Victoria says “rare moments like that makes teaching worthwhile; it’s nice to be validated.”

She had one of those moments many years ago when she was teaching journalism at a large school district. She took her students on a field trip to the Johnson Space Center in Houston to interview a couple astronauts for the school paper. She still remembers the moment with a sort of awe:

As we took our VIP tour, I was introduced to every engineer, astronaut, and NASA admin as if I were a celebrity [and] with this statement “This is Victoria;

she's a teacher." As we left, after interviewing the astronauts, I asked the tour guide why they were so excited a teacher was among them. The tour guide said, "If you didn't do your job, none of us would be able to do ours." Every teacher in the world, I think, should be validated like that.

That moment was followed with other works at the facility telling Victoria their favorite teacher stories. "It makes you want to find the teachers and tell them, 'you made a difference.'"

Besides the monumental moments which give her great joy, Victoria loves teaching and the place she has landed now, a quarter of a century into it. With blond hair, blue eyes and a baritone voice, she is what she looks like, gentle and loving with a bit of an edge that serves students well. She says at this point in her career, with the degree of experience and knowledge she has gained, along with an excellent building administration, and her own children who are now grown, that "I am free to teach with passion and do what I know students need. I feel more focused on teaching and have more time to think than ever before. I guess I need less sleep—I go to sleep when it's time to go bed and don't have to think about so many other things going on in my life." She adds that the thing that she likes the most is that she likes being around kids, "If that ever changes, I'm going to the house."

She says that she is a teacher who cares for each student and believes wholeheartedly that every student is gifted in an area and part of her job is to help them find that area of giftedness and assist them in honing it. "I'm that teacher that is a little

bit crazy and a little bit rock and roll,” she says. “They’re pretty amazed that I have seen Ozzy Osborne in concert.” Her students know she is real and can relate to them.

### ***Creativity in Teaching***

I’ve never met a teacher worth her certificate who didn’t place a premium on creativity in the classroom and Victoria extends that value. She says that “creativity is important in that it allows a teacher to place her own spin on the concepts she’s teaching. I have only just recently felt free enough use the full extent of my creativity.” Daily, she takes ideas and assignments and thinks about how she can make this fun for the students. A recent poetry assignment sprung from a poem about baby’s feet was her most recent twist. Instead of just having the students write a poem related to it, she had them trace their own feet on construction paper and write their poem within the lines around their footprint. “Even small touches like that cause paper and pen assignments to spring to life,” she says. The idea is to think of different ways to present material, to keep the movement and the flow going, and for Victoria, it’s a given that she teaches that way, whether in small ways like altering a pen and paper assignment or in larger ways; creativity is inherent in good teaching.

### ***Professional Development***

The words *professional development* stir up a hornet’s nest in Victoria, one she supports with her story. “I went to the worst in-service in the last 25 years last summer. It was 8 hours long and the presenter read PowerPoint slides to us,” she says, adding that they were treated poorly, as well, such as when they tried to come back from lunch early and “we were chastised for entering the classroom early” for reasons she never got. This

particular workshop, presented by someone from across the state, she says, was over the 5E lesson plan model that is part of CSCOPE's curriculum. Why was it so bad?

"Because the information and content of the workshop was repetitive, and my colleagues and I have been *doing this for years*. I had evolved the 5E model without ever being taught the 5E model—why didn't I market that?"

Victoria doesn't want to sound cynical, but she says, "I have paddled with Madelyn, planned to plan, and bloomed with Bloom." She adds that "the fact of the matter is all teacher prep has the intention of revolutionizing teaching, but each teacher is the variable that will enable student to actually learn material."

However, Victoria doesn't have all bad things to say about CSCOPE training. "My training in CSCOPE along with the new ELA TEKS was excellent. However, it negated CSCOPE for this year." Since CSCOPE will be implementing new curriculum for the new TEKS a year after the new TEKS were in place, the trainer simply gave them The Year at a Glance (YAG) document to use with new TEKS. She says the difficult part was the decision it left. Would she follow CSCOPE with old TEKS? Or use the YAG with new TEKS? The new TEKS won't actually be tested until next year's TAKS, so the decision was up to the teachers on how to make it work.

She does have one very positive response to professional development from many years ago. "The very best professional development I have ever had— hands down— was New Jersey Writing and Reading. The writing alone was a 3-week training, and the reading was a separate week, but it's still something about which she raves. "It was best because it awakened the writer in me and helped me see reading-

writing connections,” she says. It helped her find the writer in her again, and she says that helps her, in turn, help students find the writer in them. “Each year I tell students that I will help get that writer out, kicking and screaming.”

### ***Encountering CSCOPE***

As other teachers have noted, sometimes meeting CSCOPE for the first time can be a disconcerting experience, sort of like an off-key violin in a symphony:

My first introduction to CSCOPE came during curriculum writing session at my education service center, while I was writing curriculum under John Crain’s supervision—we had *the man* John Crain (listed as one of the people behind CSCOPE)—the region ESC specialists who were in the room assisting us told us on the 11<sup>th</sup> day we had missed of class that year that it didn’t matter what we had put down on our curriculum, that it was already obsolete and we wouldn’t be using it because a new curriculum CSCOPE, or as we affectionately call it Crain-Scope, was now being adopted by districts across the state. Needless to say, we were disheartened, and felt devalued, as teachers of often do when asked to do some of the monumental task they are asked.

Clearly, part of the negative feelings came from the time away from students. They had been out 11 school days, losing valuable instructional time in order to write curriculum. The time away was mandatory, varying within the district for all four core areas at different times over four years, away from 8-11 days total, with ELA having the most time away. Victoria’s understanding was that the district paid \$10,000 in fees per subject matter to train them in developing their own curriculum. “The following school



year, I followed the curriculum I had written under John Crain and with several gifted area teachers.” They learned in the spring of 2009 that they would be implementing CSCOPE in the upcoming school year. And Victoria found a surprise that confused her a bit. She noted that CSCOPE looked “amazingly” like the curriculum they had written with Crain in their training. She can only speculate from there. She wonders whether it was a training session to eventually use for CSCOPE and perhaps other teachers’ lessons were used. Maybe it was a coincidence, she says, but it looked very similar, though the lessons were not the same.

Victoria’s first exposure to CSCOPE certainly didn’t set her up for a long term subscription, but she was willing to try, nonetheless. When her district purchased CSCOPE she dove in head first with the curriculum.

“I was extremely objective in adopting the use of CSCOPE prior to and while using it; however, I cannot get past the mundane activities, the redundancy of the activities, and the misspelling grammatical errors and misinformation,” she says. She cites examples such as basic errors in literary terms. While it was not prevailing, she says there should not be errors in such basic elements in the study of language arts. A very eye-opening day came when the students were working on a CSCOPE assignment that had “numerous typos.” The kids said, “Miss Victoria you didn’t type this did you—this is CSCOPE.” That would be a turning point for her.

She is also concerned by the fact that when the teachers have questions the blame for problems seems to be put back on them. “They act like it’s us,” she says, when they express concerns such as the sequence of curriculum not being taught in a way that can

work. The district administration tells them, she says, “ ‘We will get you help. We will get you training’— alluding to fact that it was somehow the teacher who was at fault.

Some of the concerns are just that, concerns. For example, she says, in the elementary CSCOPE, a teacher expressed concern that Johnny Appleseed was taught as an example of an American hero, but this occurred right near Veteran’s Day when they felt there were so many “nonfiction examples of real heroes, such as soldiers firemen,” that could have been studied. So to Victoria, the answer isn’t more training on the scope and sequence. “That’s not going to help—what is [scope and sequence] training going to help you with?”

“I just think for \$14,000 a year our ISD there’s a better product,” she says, referring to what has been reportedly paid by her district for CSCOPE.

“It’s scam,” she says. “It’s like all the tests Pearson puts out. Can people in this country not wake up? The LSAT, MCAT, all of them, just as Pearson education connection, are pure profit motivated. I believe CSCOPE motivation is pure profit. It’s certainly not quality of product. “

She insists she was giving CSCOPE a fair shot and her feelings now are based on her personal experience with the curriculum, not a vendetta against it. “I entered CSCOPE with a totally open mind. When I heard we were getting it, I began to call teachers at every grade level (where she knew people using CSCOPE). I asked for pros and cons.” She felt like the schools where teachers only had to follow the scope and sequence had more positive outcomes and positive comments than the ones who were forced to implement entire curriculum.

Fortunately, she says, they are allowed to only use the scope and sequence at her school. “Our principal trusts us; he loves our kids,” she says, thankful that she can still teach like the professional she is.

Victoria loves her students too. In fact, she ends every class with “I love you have a great day.” She says if she forgets to say it, they stay and wait to hear it. To her, the students are her investment, not a curriculum document. And it’s hard for her to respect the document. “From the quality of activities [in CSCOPE], you can tell they were very inexperienced teachers [creating it].”

### ***Reflecting on CSCOPE***

Now that she has embraced CSCOPE wholeheartedly and then tossed it in her stacks in favor of her own teaching, Victoria reflects on the idea of it:

I believe, in theory, the idea of a state curriculum is a positive thing in that students who move from district to district will not sit through same unit twice and have gaps in education. That’s vital. I believe the product that we have now, CSCOPE, must be overhauled and developed by teachers from all over the state—not just a select few. I believe that the activities are sub-par, and I am almost embarrassed for the company to have put out such junk. The quality is pathetic. The scope and sequence at my level is satisfactory; however, that’s not true of every level and every subject.

Like the other teachers in this study, Victoria lauds the idea of a solid scope and sequence and says that part is wonderful. She was used to having one in her larger metropolitan schools and had been asking for one upon coming to her current district.

What's great about a district wide scope and sequence is that when students move, change schools, etcetera won't sit through *Romeo and Juliet* two times and miss out on short stories. But my students, at the end of 12 weeks of CSCOPE activities, were bored and so confused by the similarities of the CSCOPE worksheets—they can't even recall which assignment they can't even recall which assignment they had turned in and which ones they hadn't.

The constant use of worksheets is one of her greatest issues with CSCOPE. She says that so many students can't write adequately anyway. "We have the TAKS test because of worksheets; worksheets brought about the demise of students," she says. Worksheets rarely require students to answers questions in complete sentences, and they have been used so much that Victoria asserts, things such as the TAKS ELA open-ended reading questions have become an area of struggle for many students.

She adds that "photocopying so many things, I feel guilty for killing trees every day. In the past my students generated their assignments on their own paper versus a worksheet I had photocopied."

Her break up with CSCOPE came on that fateful day the students said, "you didn't type this did you, this is CSCOPE." She says until that day, she had followed CSCOPE "verbatim, without question, going against what my gut was telling me." She feels like twelve solid weeks of implementing something that was resulting in her kids learning less and even recognizing mistakes in the curriculum, twelve weeks of worksheets and mandates, was it. "When they commented that I couldn't have typed it, I realized I had reached the saturation level—enough is enough." And so she shelved it

and follows only the scope and sequence, which, she says, her building and district administration have now agreed that the “best result is wading in and using scope and sequence first.”

“CSCOPE,” she says, is “boring, bland and full of errors; there’s not enough protein. [It’s] eating candy.”

Another issue that has hindered her rural students is the assumptions CSCOPE makes. She says it often prescribes activities depend on a student’s knowledge of an urban area. One example might be similar to reading subway timetables. There’s a whole new learning curve associated with even understanding something like that if the students has never traveled out of the rural area, which many have not.

Not everything in CSCOPE is bad, either. She says that the concepts can be TEKS-based and challenging, citing a unit she finished unit on bias and propaganda. She felt like there was real substance to the unit, which covered everything from entertainment to news to politics. “The unit was good,” she says. “The activities were fluffy.”

To her the whole point is that education is individual and unique to the students and teachers. “They can send any living, breathing body into a classroom with that curriculum document and they can teach the same things as another teaching that,” she says, but in the end it’s really “not possible because *the teacher is the variable*.”

As others have noted, CSCOPE might be helpful for new teachers. Victoria can see that if she had had something like that straight out of school it would have saved her

a tremendous amount of time, but, she also cautions, “I don’t know if it would have honed my skills of developing activities that were suited for my specific students.”

### ***Paradigm Changes***

Unfortunately for Victoria, the only paradigm change to come from CSCOPE is a negative one. “I believe adding CSCOPE has been more frustrating than helpful,” she says, but she holds out hope. “But I have not yet given up on the idea of a statewide curriculum. I believe that for Texas students to get equitable education some type of statewide document needs to be in place. I’m not certain CSCOPE is that document. I still believe money is at the heart of the motivation instead of the education of our children.” In her case, she has given it a fair shot. “I tried it; it didn’t work.” So she simply went back to what she knows works. The only change she made was that she then did it “in the order they want me to do it.”

And even with the scope and sequence, she is making some modifications. One example is that it called for doing *Caesar* in the fall. The sequence had two weeks of poetry followed by 10-12 days on *Julius Caesar*. It just wasn’t realistic, she says, to hand a student a play that tough, so early in the year and expect they are going to get it instantly. “I broke with the sequence with that and will teach it in the spring—once I have done another drama which is less difficult.” She also wanted to teach some more literary terms that would help the students understand Shakespeare so they didn’t have to just “skim” the top of poetry and then go into *Julius Caesar*.

So even as she has tried to adjust her teaching to accommodate the scope and sequence, something for which she is an advocate, she still can't fully adapt to it in light of things she says are not working for her students.

"Somebody was sold a bill of goods," she says about CSCOPE. "I was sold on the idea—totally sold out to it... I tried to give it my all. We do need a statewide curriculum. I just really want them to think. What's best for kids? I don't have the answer—I see the need for statewide curriculum; there's going to have to be a scope and sequence." But she doesn't claim to know how to get there, only that CSCOPE isn't the destination.

Her thoughts about being a good teacher are far-less related to the document in hand than the passion and knowledge of the teacher. "If you don't love kids—go home! If you don't love your subject matter—go home! If you can't teach kids to read and write—go home!"

For Victoria, the fact remains, the teacher is the variable.

### ***Summary***

Victoria's interview reveals a teacher who loves her job and wants what is best for her students. After 25 years of teaching she feels like she finally is in a place she can teach her best without all the extraneous pressures that sometimes flood a teacher's life. Having a grasp on these, she was ready to welcome CSCOPE, despite her initial negative introduction to it at a curriculum writing workshop. She wanted to be fair and give it every opportunity to work for her, but she couldn't make it happen despite her best intentions. Being an experienced teaching and having CSCOPE flung at her proved

a devaluing experience. She notes the lessons seem as if they were designed by newer teachers and, especially as a teacher teaching English language arts, found the continual errors that even her students discovered in CSCOPE-generated documents too much. After 12 solid weeks of verbatim implementation she reverted to using only scope and sequence, and only as long as that made sense to her.

Maintaining her professionalism and diversity as a teacher using CSCOPE was actually made easier when she flung it aside. To be a professional, Victoria feels she must combine her years of experience, her love for students and the wisdom she has from both to create a classroom experience conducive to learning. For her, being the professional she knows herself to be meant not using the curriculum.

Being creative is a hallmark of the way Victoria runs her classroom and while she attempted to continue that, found it difficult under a prescribed curriculum. If a script is dictating how to do something even to the point of making worksheets for student, she feels the opportunity she has—and that the students have to generate their own work—is lost in the streams of CSCOPE.

Ultimately, Victoria concedes Texas does need a state curriculum to ensure equitable education for all students, but insists that CSCOPE is not that product, above all because the teacher is the variable and CSCOPE seeks to unify the teacher into one voice.

## **DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

The subjects interviewed for this study have all referred to areas of CSCOPE which have impacted their feelings about the curriculum, as well as the management



behind it, but what does CSCOPE look like from a fresh view? I have examined some documents to try to show a separate picture of the curriculum itself. I was able to get actual lesson plans, as well as regular CSCOPE communication, such as newsletters.

Initially, I examined an 18-page lesson plan from English 1, which happened to be the first lesson of the year, suggested to last four days. It is entitled “Finding Myself: The True Me.” This lesson, like all CSCOPE ELA lessons begin with a lesson synopsis which contains an objective:

Thorough the study of plot, setting, and character development, the concept of identity is first introduced to students in James Thurber’s short story, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* [sic]. Students are asked to select a personal role model, and write a personal narrative comparing shared similarities and differences.

After the introduction there is always a list of the TEKS the lesson covers. This one covers four main TEKS: (1) “Writing/purposes. The student writes in a variety of forms, including business, personal, literary, and persuasive texts, for various audiences and purposes,” with three subcategories; (3) “Writing/ grammar/ usage/ conventions/ spelling. The student relies increasingly on the conventions and mechanics of written English, including the rules of grammar and usage, to write clearly and effectively,” with one subcategory; (4) “Writing/inquiry/research. The student uses writing as a tool for learning,” with one subcategory; (7) “Reading/comprehension. The student comprehends selections using a variety of strategies,” with three subcategories; (11) “Reading/literary concepts. The student analyzes literary elements for their contributions to meaning in literary texts,” with two subcategories.

With CSCOPE lessons there exists no question whether one is covering relevant TEKS, though one curiosity I found was, for example, with (3), which reads on the lesson plan: “(B) demonstrate control over grammatical elements such as subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement, verb forms, and ~~parallelism~~.” CSCOPE uses strike-through to indicate when most but not all of a TEKS aspect is involved; however, what was curious is that (3) (B) is an objective but (3) (A) was not listed. It says “(A) produce legible work that shows accurate spelling and correct use of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization such as italics and ellipses.” It strikes a question as to why more complicated grammatical elements such as subject-verb agreement would be expected but capitalization doesn’t go with the objectives, for example.

The next section is entitled “Getting Ready for Instruction” and contains performance indicators, how the teacher knows the students did it. It also has “Key Understandings and Guiding Questions,” “Vocabulary of Instruction,” and “Materials.” The materials section is quite comprehensive. For these four days alone they include the following: student journals, memorabilia, teacher selected objects, white posters, scissors, glue, collaborative group art materials, timer(s)/clocks for collaborative teams, and journals. While it would be possible to do this lesson as far as meeting objectives, I can’t think of too many teachers in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade who would have these in their rooms ready to go for four days of use.

The next list is called “Resources: and it includes eleven handouts, which are also contained in the lesson. Most of these are worksheets. At least nine of these would

need to be given to each student, though the lesson specifics seven should be copies, two more are grammar sheets, a worksheet and recorded sheet that also go to each student. And English 1 teacher might have 25 students per class, times six classes. So 150 worksheets multiplied by 9 would equal 1350 copies for a four day lesson. This would be problematic in schools, as well, as copy allocations would not likely allow for such high production.

Also included on resources is a website to access the story. CSCAPE doesn't follow a standard textbook since these are individual to school districts adoption. In this case, a geocities website was linked but geocities shut down its free web sites a few months ago, so if a teacher went in this year to use it, it would likely be unviable. Resources also include "Popular brand, well known items (action figures, sporting goods, etc.)" (Finding Myself, 2008, p. 2), as well as more craft supplies in addition to what was listed earlier, including yarn and glitter. Finally, it suggests a document camera.

The next section is called "Advance Preparation," and this lists the work a teacher should do before teaching these four days. Some of it is obvious, such as locating the story. The next one asks the teacher to explore suggested websites. These sites are a mix of quality. Some are literary terms from the region service center site, but a couple of them are sites teachers repeatedly ask students not to use and would be unlikely to model, such as enotes.com and bookrags.com, which are the high tech Cliffs Notes of a modern era.

This section continues, asking teachers to review suggested journal prompts, then to select items for display in the classroom. It makes some suggestions for these items, including Nike and Adidas shoes, sports teams logos on clothing, a doll or figurine such as “Barbie, Santa Claus, Spiderman, King Kong, G.I. Joe (Finding Myself, 2008, p. 2) Next it tells the teacher to divide students into collaborative groups and lists their titles and roles. It then asks the teacher to prepare poster board and art supplies into bags or container for each group

The last section prior to the actual lesson plan contest is called “Background Information,” and in this case it defines the word characterization in quite a bit of detail, that one might wonder why a person with a degree in English would need such an extensive definition.

The aforementioned are the first two pages of the packet for the four-day lesson. The next several sheets of paper, pages 3-7, contain the lesson plan itself, with a section for each of the five “E”s that make up the plan.

These are what CSCOPE calls “exemplar lessons” and CSCOPE notes that it is also possible for teachers to replace these 5Es with their own, and it provides a link for a Microsoft Word template teachers can upload into the system. Obviously, this would be dependent on the district mandates. The top of the 5E section states that “Instructors are encouraged to supplement, and substitute resources, materials, and activities to differentiate instruction to address the needs of learners” (Finding Myself, 2008, p. 3).

The 5E section is called “Instructional Procedures” and it lists each E with substantial details. As it begins, the main body will have the words—such as ENGAGE,

and tell what to do to fulfill the required E “Have students focus on the items in the classroom display that evoke childhood members [sic]. Review the items one at a time” (Finding Myself, 2008, p. 3). The section goes on to list numerous questions (14, with sub-questions) teachers can ask students about the memories, their favorites, their wishes, and related ideas.

### ***Engage***

The right third of the page is a section called “Notes for Teacher” which gives information such as the timeline. The “ENGAGE” section, for example says it should be one 50 minute day. Underneath that it tells the teacher where and how to set up the materials and when to ask questions. It gives a note for vocabulary and how to incorporate it. And it specifically says things such as:

Point or pick up an item one at a time, and let students teach to each one as they answer each of the questions. Select a scribe to note the responses on the board or note the responses by means of a document camera or large display class tablet. Call on volunteers to answer the questions. (Finding Myself, 2008, p. 3).

### ***Explore***

The lesson moves on to the “EXPLORE” portion of the lesson, where it begins with a script:

Today we will begin exploring how identity is very unique to all of us, or is it? This is just one of the questions that we will ponder as we read a short story entitled, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* [sic] written by James Thurber and

published in 1939. It is a story of a character who is constantly redefining who he is as a result of the events that occur in his life. (Finding Myself, 2008, p. 4)

The right margin here contains state resources for scaffolding information in reading. It also tells the teacher to review the graphic organizer handout.

### ***Explain***

“EXPLAIN” comes next and continues with a series of questions for teachers to ask students or to get them to think. The right margin includes some suggestions for words the teacher can use. It says, “Use words such as: adventurous, brave, creative, intelligent, lazy, happy and enthusiastic” as teacher help students find words to describe themselves (Finding Myself, 2008, p. 4).

### ***Elaborate***

The next section, “ELABORATE” builds on the previous by asking why characters act a certain way, what students believe about their own identity and other related concepts. It then moves students into collaborative groups. Here there is a script for teachers to give students instructions, “Students, each collaborative group is to:” (Finding Myself, 2008, p. 5); this is followed by a list of four things the groups are to do. Again, the right side margin holds note and suggestions for the teacher to do certain things or retrieve certain materials.

### ***Evaluate***

The fifth E is “EVALUATE” and this is where students produce a product as they are to select a role model and write their narrative comparing and contrasting themselves with the role model.

However, this is not the end of the lesson. It also included a grammar section, where explore, explain and evaluate are used again in context with the grammar. In short, this aspect is the same style as the literature lesson. It begins with instructions for the teacher to write the following sentences on the board. They are then to question the students about what is wrong and how to fix them. The sentences are as follows:

1. Mom is a lawyer, but I know little about it.
2. When the ball hit the hoop, it bounced.
3. The chairperson told Maria that she would have to resign. (Finding Myself, 2008, p. 6).

It then tells the teacher to ask the students to copy the sentences or to read them aloud and has suggested questions to ask the students.

The next section is, essentially, a definition of pronouns and how they relate to antecedents; it goes with one of the additional worksheets needed for the unit. And the evaluation section then asks students to respond to one of three journal prompts written on the board. CSCOE provides a list of two journal prompts with no reference to the third. Then students are to underline each pronoun and its antecedent in the paragraph they have written. The marginal instructions tell the teacher that he or she can have the students check their paragraphs or trade with a partner and explains how this process will help students identify the antecedent for their pronouns.

## **ELA NEWSLETTERS**

Each six weeks CSCOE provide a newsletter for each core area and the level to which it corresponds. For this study I looked at high school English language arts, since

all the subjects taught in this area. These newsletters are just that; colorful newsletter with tips and information ones CSCOPE ELA lessons and curriculum. Replete with web links to CSCOPE, TEA and ESC websites, these newsletters tend to begin with tips, such as how to make a cooperative group in the classroom, such as the 2008-2009 newsletter cover story entitled “Tips and Tools for Managing Cooperative Groups.” It goes on to provide an anecdote of how it can be a challenge to get the right group formed, and then gives tips on how to do it. The same newsletter, which is ten pages, contains questioning strategies, differentiation strategies, and a variety of tips and hints with web links.

### **LISTSERV**

Primarily, it appears that the listserv is used more for updates or a before sense, such as telling members it is time to register for a professional development conference or that certain update to an area of CSCOPE are online now. While I have received this emails for some time, they have not been enlightening to understanding CSCOPE in a significant way, and seem to mostly provide links to 1) register for a conference or see the updates on said conference, 2) buy a new CSCOPE supply such as a new scope and sequence book or science notebooks for younger grades (usually with a bit of scales pitch) or 3) see live updates within CSCOPE itself.

### **SUMMARY**

A plethora of documents for CSCOPE exist. Since this is an online curriculum managements system, the electronic trail is lengthy; however, the examination of one lesson plan, especially as it relates to the majority of teachers offering their take on



CSCOPE, should provide some initial insight to what CSCOPE does and offers, as well as getting an idea of the various newsletters and emails sent. Additionally, CSCOPE makes available numerous PowerPoint presentations in pdf from, as well as papers that further enumerate the merits of the system.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **EMERGENT THEMES FROM THE STUDY**

This study examined the effects of the implementation of the CSCOPE state curriculum on four experienced English language arts teachers who have found themselves in a district that has adopted CSCOPE. It shows their experiences in implementation of the curriculum after several years of successful teaching. Because each teacher worked in a different school and had varying experiences, their stories were different, but similarities certainly existed. The similarities of their experiences became apparent and produced three major themes emerged from this study and will be discussed in the first section of this chapter: 1) CSCOPE is terrific in theory but ineffective in practice, 2) Good teachers teach in spite of CSCOPE, not with it, 3) CSCOPE makes too many false assumptions about students.

#### **EMERGENT THEME ONE: CSCOPE IS TERRIFIC IN THEORY BUT INEFFECTIVE IN PRACTICE**

Even in their unanimous negation of CSCOPE as a whole, the participants cited praise for the idea that the curriculum was trying to fulfill. The need for some sort of curriculum alignment or statewide curriculum was acknowledged by all participants as a valid need, yet they also insisted that CSCOPE is not the way to implement this idea because their learners are too diverse for such a one-size-fits-all model.

### ***Curriculum Alignment***

While teachers agreed that there is some need to “get us all on same page,” they unanimously disagreed that CSCOPE has effectively executed this goal. While these teachers indicated they would like to have alignment for such purposes as eliminating vast reteaching every year because they would know what the students have gained the previous years, they say CSCOPE isn’t the answer to this issue. Rather than giving teachers direction that would help ensure statewide equitable education, CSCOPE has overlooked teacher expertise, which teachers says eliminates benefits to both teacher and student. “When I saw what we had to deal with in the first unit, my concern was that this isn’t really going to do anything for our students; this isn’t really going to help them with things they need from where they are to where we need to get them,” one teacher said.

These teachers applauded the idea of a statewide curriculum. “We would like to have them all at the level where you can really interact,” one said. “That’s the ideal, part of the dream of education, but the fact is, when districts are measured by test scores, things that have to be covered first before they enter a dream world,” the teacher said, referring to the idealized way in which CSCOPE aligns curriculum without recognizing differences. One teacher, a champion of a state curriculum, said she really wanted CSCOPE to work, but she said “I believe the product that we have now, CSCOPE, must be overhauled and developed by teachers from all over the state—not just a select few. I believe that the activities are sub-par, and I am almost embarrassed for the company to

have put out such junk. The quality is pathetic. The scope and sequence at my level is satisfactory; however, that's not true of every level and every subject."

Another teacher echoed the feelings about the scope and sequence. "It's written in front of us, and we know that's what we have to teach. It's nice to have that. They did that for us. That was nice." But she stopped there, saying it wasn't realistic beyond that point. And another teacher conceded that there are a "lot of good things in there. In theory, it's really good. It just doesn't always work."

Perhaps the most visual expression came from the teacher who compared CSCOPE to the Industrial Revolution. She said there was a lot of talk at beginning of the Industrial Revolution where educators wanted to set up classrooms to look like assembly lines, with all rows facing forward, and doing everything in a set order. Ultimately, it was determined that this type of classroom structure didn't really help kids learn anything. The teacher noted that is what CSCOPE is doing in the methodology area—taking a set of rows and saying this works for everybody. "It's the same idea," she said. "Deliver, pass to the front of the row, the teacher picks it up, go on to next thing—that is what this is." And she asked: "Why don't they look back to what they have been griping about lately about all the desks in a row and learn from that?"

### ***Alternative Settings***

Another way in which the teachers felt that CSCOPE was a good idea that couldn't fulfill its intentions was in the variety of alternative settings they experienced. Four teachers from different parts of the state, with different demographics and class sizes, all agreed that in some way they teach an alternative population, whether in ESOL

classes, alternative school settings or within the regular classroom with students who do not fall under “average” labels.

One teacher simply said, “As the years have gone by, we have been saying *no way, we’re not doing it.*” CSCOPE does not work in alternative school setting, she said. “We need to follow scope and sequence... so if they do *Julius Caesar* in CSCOPE, they can do the exact same things but with a different literary work.” She also said bits and pieces can work.

Because CSCOPE has a plethora of materials, teachers said they take parts when they can, handouts or graphic organizers that might fit, and incorporate what could be helpful, but, by no means, did any of them use CSCOPE as prescribed, or even remotely so. One teacher said, “no way can we do what CSCOPE says. It doesn’t fit the alternative setting.”

Another who teaches multiple grades added that it was not going to work for seven different grade levels of students. Even without their mixed ability levels, teaching so many grades in one classroom makes the execution too burdensome to be realistic. “I do not recommend a school district to take on CSCOPE,” she said. And another added, “Teacher-created curriculum is actually what makes this setting work. The message they sent: ‘everything on the same page at the same time’ doesn’t work for us.” Each agreed that after many years of doing their jobs, they were better skilled in how to make lessons work, especially where the setting is alternative, whether an alternative school, language barriers or any other deviation from “average,” which is a level more and more classrooms have in a diverse society.

Ultimately all the teachers agreed that while the initial idea is viable in theory, one size cannot fit all in application. “Somebody was sold a bill of goods,” one teacher said. “We do need a statewide curriculum. I just really want them to think. What’s best for kids?”

## **EMERGENT THEME TWO: GOOD TEACHERS TEACH IN SPITE OF CSCAPE, NOT WITH IT**

While the teachers in this study had eventually abandoned prescribed use of CSCAPE, they essentially felt their abandonment was for the sake of their teacher professionalism and efficacy, and, ultimately, out of true service to their students.

### ***Student Need***

One thing all of these experienced teachers agreed upon is that there are new trends coming their way every few years and they take none as gospel but instead learn to modify and cater them to student need. As ELA teachers, they all said the bottom line was depending on the skills of the students and enabling them to go to a higher level than that at which they arrived, regardless of what CSCAPE asked. One said, “I have paddled with Madelyn, planned to plan, and bloomed with Bloom.” She added that “the fact of the matter is all teacher prep has the intention of revolutionizing teaching, but each teacher is the variable that will enable students to actually learn material.”

One teacher represented the group’s opinion well in saying “I make adjustments and adaptations as I see my kids and areas to cover as far as lessons and their development.” She added that her lessons have been directed by CSCAPE only in that they have identified that a certain unit should study a certain area, but that won’t affect

her methodology and strategies. She said, as did all the teachers in some fashion, that her job is knowing the key and making it work for the individual student.

Another teacher said she has to “know and understand students and know their learning styles so [I can] individualize for them. We change up things and we have this freedom.” Another added that she “was able to adjust the work and time spent on projects and readings to have more development from [students] rather than having to read this in two weeks,” she says, referring to the timelines CSCOPE suggests.

This is why a prescribed curriculum like CSCOPE cannot be a part of effective teaching, they said. This was a thought echoed in some manner by all the teachers, as well. Each concurred with these ideas, but one teacher had precise vocabulary for how CSCOPE and other prescriptions impact their efforts to do what they are trained to do:

After you have learned your profession and seen the pendulum swing from side to side over periods of time, it seems constant that we get on one roller coaster and ride it to the end. We get our thrills and giggles out of it, and get our oohs and ahs. Then we get on another one. What matters is that there is someone with concern for kids in the classroom. You show up consistently, with your heart and you go to work to help them understand because you are ultimately responsible for that field in their lives. You determine their needs because you *know* them, as individuals, not some script telling you what to do, but because you know them and effectively tailor lessons that will help them develop into thinking individually. *That’s how you remain effective.*

She added that if [students] know you are helping them, they respect you rather than “wipe regurgitation off their faces and leave with [no respect].” To be an effective teacher, she said, a teacher must look at the students:

[Students] can’t help what they come to you with. If you take what you've got, stop complaining about it, they start feeling good. The growth is exponential... I can learn... I can learn. And once they see that they start growing.

The bottom line for all these teachers and their own efficacy and success was that they knew their students and took efforts to individualize curriculum and teaching as much as was possible in their classrooms. To them, they know students need far better than an 18-page lesson plan.

### ***Creativity***

All teachers agreed that creativity was crucial to learning, but they resounded even louder regarding alternative settings, from ESOL to multi-level classrooms to alternative schools, the idea was clear: “If it’s not creative in some way you’re going to lose them.”

Another teacher added, “If you don’t have creativity, you cannot be a good teacher. You have to be flexible have creativity and desire to give every student what they need. I do so many different things. I never know what a day or class will bring. I have a huge tool belt, and I don’t need a curriculum,” she says.

A common frustration they all felt was the lack of respect for their own abilities to be creative teachers who possessed the education and skills to execute a higher level of quality education. One said, “You don’t have to spoon feed to us. We’re highly



educated people. So I don't understand why the[y] think they need to set our curriculum out for us... this two weeks, that two weeks, this three weeks, etcetera, etcetera, this is what you do for the year."

They all know that TAKS scores are an important part of the CSCOPE implementation, as well as their own jobs, but they see that teaching creatively is what helps scores, achievement and success, not a prescribed worksheet.

And one teacher brought up an important factor for the experienced teachers when she said, "[Creativity] allows a teacher to place her own spin on the concepts she's teaching. I have only just recently felt free enough use the full extent of my creativity." To these teachers, they have leaned by trial and error over the years; they have learned their students, their classrooms, and they are at stages in their career where they are enough of a master at their subject that they can take time to express their creativity. The advent of CSCOPE is a hindrance to all of them in this realm. Each one lamented its lack of teaching creativity because prescription can't get inside each of their minds to think for them.

One teacher expressed with both disgust and amusement the idea all the teachers tried to make when she said:

They don't have any models the way I model in my class. I might teach a vocabulary word for *dance*—I don't say a word... I get up and (makes dancing motions). They don't forget that. Or, she says, when she taught the word *urge*. The students said "Miss? What is urge? Her response: "Oh I have the urge to go poo." Then they got it.

“That’s not in CSCOPE,” she said.

### **EMERGENT THEME THREE: CSCOPE MAKES TOO MANY FALSE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT STUDENTS**

Ideally, a curriculum that could be fit to students statewide would also have applications that could be effectively taught to all students, but participants in this study say that is not happening. Instead, they say, it’s created a dichotomy of assumptions. On one hand, it assumes students read at and can handle higher levels of work than their students can. On the other hand, it contains activities and worksheets that are more suited for lower grades or non-thinking activities.

#### ***High-Level Assumptions***

An assumption CSCOPE seems to make that all teachers cited was that the curriculum was expecting student to be at a higher level than most realistically were. They were not critical of its ambition to be at a high level. Actually, this was a praise they shared in an ideal setting, but the fact that the lessons seem to reach too high for the level at which secondary students enter was a vast concern for all teachers. As one teacher noted, the first false assumption CSCOPE makes is that it assumes students come in the door knowing how to read and are literate to a level they can grasp the opening of the units.

While CSCOPE is at times ambitious in its prescription, it is not always likely to be carried out, all the teachers said, regardless of their classes or assignments. One teacher cited a prime example of this in teaching short stories to freshmen, a class all of the teachers happened to teach at least one section of at the time of their interview.

The first unit of the year for English I begins with six short stories, starting with “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty.” One teacher pointed out that it was all she could do to get through two of the six stories because even the first was an unrealistic read for incoming freshmen. She said, initially, the students could not decipher the reality from the fantasy in this classic story in which a man uses fantasy for escapism throughout the tale. In order to do any of what CSCOPE mandated, she had to backtrack to be sure they understood the basics of the story.

While all the teachers noted that there is some room in CSCOPE for teacher discretion, they found much of the mandates very difficult to effectively implement due to assumptions. English teachers repeatedly noted that even the scope and sequence, the one aspect they did try to consistently use, often made unrealistic assumptions about the level at which a student could function. One teacher cited a lesson on *Julius Caesar* that was to occur in the fall semester, following a two-week poetry unit. The teacher said “it just wasn’t realistic to hand students a play that tough so early in the year and expect they are going to get it instantly. I broke with the sequence with that and will teach that in the spring—once I have done another drama which is less difficult.” She also wanted to teach some more literary terms that would help the students understand Shakespeare so they didn’t have to just “skim” the top of poetry and then go into *Julius Caesar*. Other teachers had similar stories, whether with the freshmen short stories or various terms required. Each said that CSCOPE expected them to be too far too fast and there are too many assumptions about what’s happening in her classroom that don’t translate to the reality of what occurs.

The teachers acknowledged that it is certainly not good that many students are not up to handling whatever level they are assigned to teach at the new school year, and yet they commented that it would be impossible for any teacher to make them instantly capable to digest this literature if they did not come with the skills needed to do so. Even with a great lesson plan, it just cannot occur until a lot of work is done in other arenas to assure they will enter ready. Teachers also pointed out an irony: in most cases, what CSCOPE is asking they do is something that, perhaps, the Advanced Placement students could do, but CSCOPE is not written for advanced curriculum, so the ones who could handle it will be the ones not getting it. The inherent ideas in the CSCOPE plans: constructing their own activities, coming up with focus, activities beyond just filling out the worksheet and handing it in, these would serve Advanced Placement students well, most noted; however, Advanced Placement has a solid curriculum in place.

The teachers who worked with ESOL students, especially, noted that while most students would, ideally, start with words on a page and then proceed to learn the words, analyze the words and further develop their thoughts, that the information on the CSCOPE page is beyond where many are. One teacher said that many don't understand "these black little squiggly marks on the page and that they are to bring something from that text and they make meaning." What they perceive is that "they started at the upper right hand corner [and went] to the bottom right hand corner, and there was something saying something to them. They had no idea. They have to get to the point of what it is saying *to* how it applies to whatever situation."

The teachers all felt that levels of students' reading and ability cannot be standardized by some worksheets and scripted lessons because it assumes what the students knew before they came to the teachers. Some said that students consistently read years under their grade level in ESOL settings. Thus, they commented, it is not an effective instructional tool. As one teacher said of CSCOPE's intent, "They have raised the bar. That's not bad, but these kids could never do that." She, and all the teachers, indicated they do want the level increased, but the way CSCOPE has pushed it is "way above" what the average student could do at this point.

Additionally, a teacher expressed the common take on the group work when she said, "There are so many different kinds of learners out there. Kids who *hate* group work, shy kids who can't stand getting in front of class. [CSCOPE has] a lot that really won't work in a realistic classroom."

From teachers in smaller schools, the assumptions went right out the window and down the road to a large campus with standardized students. One said, "It can't tell me what to do with seven levels [of classes]. Even the English 4 students can't do on-level work." Others with multiple grades or classes in one agreed.

One said, "I have no curriculum in CSCOPE. They have no [curriculum] for my kids. They don't have anything." In a class she may have 3 6<sup>th</sup> graders and 3 7<sup>th</sup> graders, and 2 8<sup>th</sup> graders, so she would try to go into CSCOPE and pull lessons from various grades and write her lesson plans. "I said 'I'm not doing it because I can't. I have too many different levels of kids.'"

One teacher concluded that she is not surprised by the assumptions it makes. “It’s one of those new ‘things’ that is going to solve *all* our problems. And when try it and it still doesn’t work, it’s just another thing we have to go throw and something else will be in its place.” She knows those seven grade levels of students who enter her room 180 days a year, and she knows that CSCOPE isn’t their answer. The teachers agree that they know their students better than a one size fits all, and they are teaching with reality, not assumptions.

### ***Low-Level Assumptions***

While CSCOPE does not seem to address the problems in its high-level assumptions that students are beyond where many actually are, it, likewise, has made many lower-level assumptions. Teachers repeatedly cited the number of worksheets and handouts in CSCOPE, saying the bulk of activities were things such as drawing pictures or doing graphic organizers. One teacher said the activities seem to be designed to send students into a group to the side where they all copy the same answers and get a grade without modeling of instruction.

Teachers all noted that the activities, when followed as prescribed, seemed repetitive. One said, “my students, at the end of 12 weeks of CSCOPE activities, were bored and so confused by the similarities of the CSCOPE worksheets—they couldn’t even recall which assignments they had turned in and which ones they hadn’t.”

Another said the activities were “superficial, anything that an elementary student could handle. We can hand an activity from CSCOPE to the students, and they would be busy doing it and would produce a product. But at end, what’s the level in student

growth?” What it reflects, she said, is an ability to fill in the blank. “It’s too contrived and superficial, assumes too much.”

## **MAIN FINDINGS**

The beginning of this study sought the answer to the following research questions:

- 1) What is it like to be an experienced teacher in a school adopting the CSCOPE curriculum?
- 2) How do teachers using CSCOPE curriculum maintain the level of teaching diversity, creativity, and professionalism that is needed to be an effective teacher?

### ***Research Question One: What is it like to be an experienced teacher in a school adopting the CSCOPE curriculum?***

(Milosevic, 2007) found that prescribed curriculum implementation is rarely effective after the second grade, monopolizes classroom time with its scripts and leaves little time for unique teacher instruction. Additionally, Milosevic found that the research fails to take into account the variance in student ability. And one naysayer said prescribed curriculum is an “insult to the talents and professional abilities of teacher” (Milosevic, 2007, p. 29).

This study showed these and similar criticisms to be accurate. Frankie and Victoria, the two most experienced teachers in this study were appalled by various aspects of CSCOPE, such as typographic errors, false assumptions about student ability, and required activities with worksheets that did little for this students. Anne and JB had

an additional barrier in that they both teach in untraditional settings. Anne's alternative school program and JB's 1A mixed grade level classroom made it an impossibility for them to use unique teacher instruction or to take the individual time needed to implement CSCOPE.

All teachers expressed some level of frustration, as well. Being experienced and knowing their students, they were suddenly thrust into a new program that, if implemented verbatim, would have redefined and even negated their years of experience. While they all tried to do some level of verbatim implementation, in the end, none held out. Anne, JB and Frankie all found it literally impossible to follow as prescribed in their settings. Victoria found it was a step backwards and reached a saturation level when the students, while doing worksheets, commented that there were many errors in them so she couldn't have done them.

In this study, being a teacher who was subjected to mandated CSCOPE implementation was an exercise in frustration and, ultimately, futility. While some teachers are still using pieces here and there, what they use is not so much unique to CSCOPE as it is "there's a graphic organizer and I want the students to do one for this essay, so I think I will print it." In the cases of these teachers, their experience outweighed CSCOPE.



***Research Question Two: How do teachers using CSCAPE curriculum maintain the level of teaching diversity and professionalism that is needed to be an effective teacher?***

Teacher efficacy is defined by Wheatley (2002) as teachers' beliefs about their ability to influence outcomes within their students. Teachers with a high sense of efficacy believe what they do influences what the student does or how high the student will achieve academically. This is a term derived from Bandura's (1997) definition of self-efficacy "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of actions required to produce given attainments" (p.3).

The teachers in this study had a high level of perceived self-efficacy—totally removed from CSCAPE. In fact, their primary reason for abandoning any substantial use of CSCAPE was that it was not serving their students; therefore, hindering their efficacy. These teachers all discuss diversity in their teaching and professionalism in the classroom. All have shown a remarkable consistency by remaining long term at a school. They are primarily concerned with meeting the needs of the students they serve, a topic they mentioned repeatedly.

The way in which these teachers maintained their levels of diversity and professionalism was to abandon substantial use of CSCAPE and do what they had seen work and continue to develop their own lessons and creativity. Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson and Fry (2004) examined a new teacher intern being placed with an experienced teacher and being mandated to use a prescribed curriculum and found her experiences to be like being in a dance studio where footprints are embedded on the

floor and new dancers are to step on the exact footprints to learn to dance (Smagorinsky, et. al., 2004). This metaphor was one that this study reflected. Teachers didn't feel they were serving students or constructing their own professional teaching lessons while using CSCAPE. CSCAPE claims that constructivism is inherent in the lessons, but that seems to only play out in its assignments for students. Teacher constructivism is not allotted for, according to the experiences of these teachers.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

As a former English language arts teacher at the secondary level, and a current one on the college level, my first response to CSCAPE was about as negative as can be imagined. Seeing a pre-printed lesson plan with a script sent all my injustice buttons off. That was a few years ago, also the first year of CSCAPE's "official" implementation. Since then I have spent time reading about programs like this, and investigating what CSCAPE is and does. Clearly nothing is all good or all bad. As the participants state, it is actually a good idea in theory. Everyone in education wants that dream world one of the subjects refers to in which all students are able to function at a high enough level that rich discussion and analytical thinking occurs in every class and everyone leaves with acceptance letters to the Ivy Leagues. In reality, a one size fits all cannot work. The participants in my study were from schools ranging in size from 1A to 5A, from mostly minority to mostly Caucasian, from high risk to middle class, from single parent to two-parent homes. The range of students represented by these teachers probably includes every extreme of students in the state of Texas, or even the nation. The teachers say it best in two different thoughts:

The teacher is the variable.

The students all have different needs.

These two simple reasons alone make CSCOPE an unrealistic mandate for every Texas school.

In addition, CSCOPE is in need of interdisciplinary links. As it stands, each core area stands alone. While some may address other areas, such as a literature lesson referring to history, there is not a deliberate interdisciplinary link. Higher-level thinking and synthesis would demand such links to be incorporated in any curriculum that asserts itself to be rigorous, as CSCOPE does.

Additionally, problems arise with gifted education, Advanced Placement, and other high-performing programs. CSCOPE doesn't address any differentiation for gifted students. In some schools, due to enrollment levels or scheduling conflicts, all levels are included in one classroom. To mandate a teacher use one curriculum system and serve all students is unrealistic. Gifted and advanced students would likely be in a different genre of study. Is it possible to merge them? Possibly. But to do so would create more busywork for a teacher rather than thoughtful preparation time. As Milosevic (2007) found, prescribed curriculum eats away class time and leaves little time for unique teacher interaction. MacGillivray, et. al. (2004) also found that teachers forced to follow a scripted reading program were stripped of opportunity to use their own literacy knowledge and noted that it may help beginner teachers to feel more competent, but, experienced teachers' "previous identities are effectively dismantled by the district and supplanted by a newly constructed and inferior identity" (MacGillivray, et. al., 2004, p.

138). Much like CSCOPE, the curriculum MacGillivray, et. al . examined, *Open Court* goes as far as scripting the bulletin board content and furniture arrangement in all classrooms, mandating the student's desk be positioned in a U-shaped format to promote visibility of *Open Court* materials by all students. While CSCOPE doesn't have that exact specification, it does list in great details supplies, examples, recommendations that, if implemented, absolve the teacher from thinking.

Many of the participants commented that CSCOPE *could* be effective for a first-year teacher, but cautioned that it would only work if there were a true mentor working with the teacher helping him or her to ease out of CSCOPE and into thinking through lessons. As one subject said, it might have helped her to have it in her first year, but then again, she isn't sure she would have learned her craft as well if it had all been handed to her.

This observation is one that ought to be considered a compromise. It is not that everything in CSCOPE is inapplicable; it is that it is a good foundation, not solution. An ideal application of CSCOPE would be in alternative education settings. Many Texas schools hire teachers in alternative certification programs. Using CSCOPE with a mentor teacher and a guide within alternative certification classes would be an appropriate use of a foundational curriculum.

Likewise, first and second year teachers might find CSCOPE a useful tool in learning the balance between creating effective lessons, planning, and covering all the standards needed. Again, this would be a nice application with a mentor teacher and careful implementation.

In both cases, ideally, the novice teacher using CSCOPE could be weaned off of the curricular dependency and guided into his or her own lessons, using similar constructive principles, but with the teacher now being the constructor of the lesson planning, which would then restore the teacher's efficacy and professional skills to their rightful places.

This study interviewed four teachers who seem to support the previous research on prescribed curriculum. It would be likely that implementing CSCOPE precisely, if every student were on par, would probably increase test scores, such as the claims from *Open Court* (SRA reading program) that its results on the improvement of test scores in schools which use it are stronger than in non-*Open Court* schools (McRae, 2002). The question should not be whether CSCOPE can bring up test scores, but whether it can improve educational value, learning, thinking, critical analysis, while providing for teacher creativity and maintaining of dignity, efficacy and professionalism. Those questions cannot be answered affirmatively in this study.

Little research yet exists on secondary prescribed curriculum within the United States. Thus far, it's been most popular in international venues and generally at high levels. While some might argue that AP or IB is prescribed, the nuances of the way in which it is implemented do not prescribe the methods in which the teachers go about educating students, and in these cases students are expected to enter at a high enough level to pass and are usually tested in some manner to be granted permission to take advanced courses. Meanwhile, in general education in the United States, prescribed curriculum at the higher levels and in all core areas is just getting some attention.

CSCOPE's success or failure in implementation and sustaining may be an indicator of what is to come.

### **FURTHER RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES**

Because CSCOPE has not been comprehensively researched, a plethora of opportunity exists for further study. One area that seems to be crucial relates to achievement. Rather than basing analysis on TAKS scores or school rankings, which are, an inbred system, achievement needs to be compared against nationally-normed achievement tests. Does a district using CSCOPE for the four years of high school see its SAT or ACT scores substantially increase? How are CSCOPE students doing when they take tests to place them in college courses? The TAKS test, while a Texas guide of achievement of Texas standards, is not the be all and end all of educational achievement. If CSCOPE is a curriculum of "*Rigor. Relevance. Quality.*" as each of its documents claim, then that should prove itself against nationally-normed standards.

Further studies may also wish to examine CSCOPE's impact on teacher efficacy. A quantitative study might explore this with a large sample size and teachers meeting specific criteria who have taught with CSCOPE as mandated for a number of years.

Additionally, it would be beneficial to look at how Texas teacher-education programs are addressing CSCOPE within its instructional components. In April 2009, CSCOPE reported, 13 of 20 of the Texas regional areas, 400 districts and over one million students being served by CSCOPE (TESCCC, 2009). If so early on in implementation CSCOPE has so many schools using it, how do educator-preparation programs respond to this, especially in methods classes?

CSCOPE is an octopus to many in Texas, with so many areas it can be hard to nail down one aspect of this large program. Only time and experience combined with more research can help to define this curriculum and its impact on education.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

1. Tell me about your life as a teacher. What have you taught?—where? What are some of the wonderful memories of your teaching career?
2. Why do you teach? What do you like about being a teacher? How do you see yourself as a teacher?
3. How does a teacher's creativity fit into being a good teacher? Talk about how you find yourself using your creativity as a teacher.
4. Tell me about your professional development opportunities and how they have aided you in teaching.
5. Tell me about CSCOPE. When did you first learn about it? How was it introduced unto your school? What were your initial thoughts?
6. Now that you have been teaching CSCOPE—what are your thoughts about CSCOPE as a state curriculum?
7. What are some of the changes the implementation of CSCOPE has brought to your teaching paradigm?

## APPENDIX B

## SAMPLE CSCOPE LESSON



English I  
English Language Arts

Unit: 1

Lesson: 1

Suggested Duration: 4 days

## Finding Myself: The True Me

## Lesson Synopsis:

Through the study of plot, setting, and character development, the concept of identity is first introduced to students in James Thurber's short story, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*. Students are asked to select a personal role model, and write a personal narrative comparing shared similarities and differences.

## TEKS:

- 1 *Writing/Purposes. The student writes in a variety of forms, including business, personal, literary, and persuasive texts, for various audiences and purposes*
- 1A Write in a variety of forms using effective word choice, structure, and sentence forms with emphasis on organizing logical arguments with clearly related definitions, theses, and evidence; write persuasively; write to report and describe; and write poems, plays and stories.
- 1B Write in a voice and style appropriate to audience and purpose.
- 1C Organize ideas in writing to ensure coherence, logical progression, and support for ideas.
- 3 *Writing/Grammar/Usage/Conventions/Spelling. The student relies increasingly on the conventions and mechanics of written English, including the rules of grammar and usage, to write clearly and effectively.*
- 3B Demonstrate control over grammatical elements such as subject-verb agreement, pronoun antecedent agreement, verb forms, and parallelism.
- 4 *Writing/Inquiry/Research. The student uses writing as a tool for learning.*
- 4E Use writing as a study tool to clarify and remember information.
- 7 *Reading/Comprehension. The student comprehends selections using a variety of strategies. The student is expected to:*
- 7G Summarize texts.
- 7H Draw inferences such as conclusions, generalizations, and predictions and support them from text.
- 7I Use study strategies such as skimming and scanning, note taking, outlining, and using study-guide questions to better understand texts.
- 11 *Reading/Literary Concepts. The student analyzes literary elements for their contributions to meaning in literary texts. The student is expected to:*
- 11C Analyze characters and identify time and point of view
- 11E Analyze the development of plot in narrative text.

## GETTING READY FOR INSTRUCTION

## Performance Indicator(s):

- Select a personal role model, and write a personal narrative comparing your similarities and differences. TEKS (11E, 1A)
- 1C, 1E, 5B, 5F, 5G

## Key Understandings and Guiding Questions:

- Analysis and the comparison of character traits assist in the examination and development of personal identity.
  - How do your personal beliefs and values shape your identity?
  - Does listening to others' personal experiences change your perception of them?
  - How can analyzing a character's traits help you?

## Vocabulary of Instruction:

- |                     |                      |                    |
|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| • role model        | • character          | • inferences       |
| • values            | • plot               | • conclusions      |
| • personal identity | • setting            | • character traits |
| • personal beliefs  | • personal narrative | • attributes       |

## Materials:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • student journals                      | • collaborative group art materials       |
| • memorabilia, teacher selected objects | • timer(s)/clocks for collaborative teams |
| • white posters                         | • Journals                                |
| • scissors                              |   |
| • glue                                  |   |

**Resources:**

- Copy of the story *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* by James Thurber or a similar story featuring character as a major literary element. Available online at: <http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Cafe/6821/thurber.html>
- Handout: **Collaborative Team: Planning Guide**
- Handout: **Reference of Pronouns to Antecedents**
- Handout: **My Role Model and Me**
- Handout: **Creating Reading Connections–The Secret Life of Walter Mitty**
- Handout: **Creating Reading Connections–Textual Annotations Organizer**
- Handout: **Creating a Character Web–the Real Walter Mitty**
- Handout: **Creating a Character Web–The Imaginary Walter Mitty**
- Handout: **A Role Model Portrait**
- Handout: **Creating “ME”–Today and Tomorrow (Part 1)**
- Handout: **Creating “ME”–Today and Tomorrow (Part 2)**
- Handout: **Writing Conventions**
- Student journals
- Popular brand, well known items (action figures, sporting goods, etc.)
- Poster board, markers, tape, glue, scissors, construction paper, yarn, old magazines, glitter
- document camera

**Advance Preparation:**

1. Locate *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* by James Thurber or a similar story with rich character development in which the interaction of the characters is defined by setting or other similar literary elements in the story.
2. Explore suggested websites:  
[www.bookrags.com/](http://www.bookrags.com/)  
[www.youthcomm.org](http://www.youthcomm.org)  
[www.esc13.net/literacy/literaryterms.html](http://www.esc13.net/literacy/literaryterms.html)  
[www.enotes.com/secret-life](http://www.enotes.com/secret-life)  
<http://hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/engramja/elements.html>
3. Review suggested journal writing topics relative to exploring personal identity, plot, role models, themes, etc.
4. Select items to be used for class display (i.e. a comic book about a superhero; a popular, commonly recognized doll or figurine such as Barbie, Santa Claus, Spiderman, Superman, King Kong, G. I. Joe; a popular brand tennis shoe or other sports item from NIKE, ADIDAS, etc.; movie or music DVD/CD packaging; t-shirts or other items displaying school or professional team logos, or any set of items that students will easily recognize). Prepare the items for presentation so that students can easily see them.
5. Assign students into collaborative groups composed of four students. Each student is to be assigned a task within the group: Task Manager, Resources Manager, Time Keeper, Reporter. All four students must contribute to the completion of the assignment.
6. Prepare poster board and art materials in plastic bags or containers to assign to each collaborative group. (i.e. markers, map pencils, crayons, tape, glue, scissors, construction paper, yarn, old magazines, glitter etc.) See attachment- *Collaborative Team Planning Guide*.
7. Make copies of Handouts: **Collaborative Team Planning Guide, Creating Reading Connections–The Secret Life of Walter Mitty, Creating a Character Web–the real and imaginary Walter Mitty, A Role Model Portrait, My Role Model and Me, and Creating “Me”–Today or Tomorrow Parts 1 and 2** for class distribution (one per student) and student use during lesson.

**Background Information:**

**Characterization**—the term that describes the process of providing information to the reader about characters developed in a literary work. The actions, thoughts, and words of the characters help to define an identity for each of these individuals. Additionally, an author uses plot and setting to further understand the motivations of the characters in his tale. Reading about characters and their experiences as they relate to the setting and plot of a story helps the reader to form a sense of his own identity.

**GETTING READY FOR INSTRUCTION SUPPLEMENTAL PLANNING DOCUMENT**

Instructors are encouraged to supplement, and substitute resources, materials, and activities to differentiate instruction to address the needs of learners. The Exemplar Lessons are one approach to teaching and reaching the Performance Indicators and Specificity in the Instructional Focus Document for this unit. A Microsoft Word template for this planning document is located at [www.cscope.us/sup\\_plan\\_temp.doc](http://www.cscope.us/sup_plan_temp.doc). If a supplement is created electronically, users are encouraged to upload the document to their Lesson Plans as a Lesson Plan Resource in your district Curriculum Developer site for future reference.

**INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES****Instructional Procedures****ENGAGE**

- Have student focus on the items in the classroom display that evoke childhood memories. Review the items one at a time.
- Encourage elaboration and connections to stories they have read or personal experience. **Do any of these items connect to stories you have read?** *Responses will vary.*
- As you proceed through the lesson, students should be able to make some connections to other stories that they have read and more importantly, make connections to personal experiences.
- Through literature, we will eventually be able to come to several conclusions about the characters that make these stories unique.
- **What memories, thoughts, or feelings do you recall when you look at any of the objects displayed?** *Responses will vary. Have students share any memories that these items bring to mind.*
- **Did any of you ever own a particular item? Have you ever played with this item?**
- **What is your favorite movie of all time?**
- **How about your favorite cartoon? Athlete? Singer? Dancer? Hero? Villain? Monster?**
- **Why do you like some friends better than others? Why do some people just make you angry even if you don't know them or have never spoken to them?**
- **Do you ever wish you could be a superhero or a super athlete?**
- **Why do you think that people are attracted to these individuals or to these items? Is it because they are beautiful? Powerful? Scary? Funny? Rich? Evil? Angry? Athletic?**
- **What is it that makes you want to be like these people or characters?**
- **What is it that makes you detest these people or characters?**
- **Does listening to the personal experiences of others change your perception of them?**
- **What experiences have you had related to the objects I have displayed here for you?**
- Have students mentally develop a list that describes each of the items in the display.
- **What characteristics, traits, or attributes can you identify in each? What made you select these characteristics, traits, or attributes?**
- **Do you think that your personal beliefs, values, or attitudes have shaped your opinion or how you feel about these items?**
- **What are your personal experiences regarding these items? Do you think that your personal experiences have shaped how you feel about**

**Notes for Teacher**

**NOTE:** 1 Day = 50 minutes

**Suggested time:** 2 Days

In a display in front of the class, set several items for students to observe which evoke childhood memories (i.e. a comic book about a superhero; a popular, commonly recognized doll or figurine such as Barbie, Santa Claus, Spiderman, Superman, King Kong, G. I. Joe; a popular brand tennis shoe or other sports item from NIKE, ADIDAS, etc.; movie or music DVD/CD packaging; t-shirts or other items displaying a school or professional team logos, or any set of items that students will easily recognize).

Ask each of the questions listed to engage all students in a class discussion relating their personal experiences, fears, and beliefs. The questions are designed to evoke memories and define the attributes of each of the items displayed before the class.

**VOCABULARY:**

Make sure that the vocabulary of instruction is continuously used throughout the lesson. Although we may not make direct mention of their definitions at the beginning of the lesson, we want to encourage inductive thought and instruction.

Point or pick up an item at a time, and let students react to each one as they answer each of the questions. Select a scribe to note the responses on the board or note the responses by means of a document camera or large display class tablet.

Call on volunteers to answer the questions.

**Instructional Procedures**

them? Do you believe that your identity is the result of your experiences? Accept and record responses to the questions.

**EXPLORE**

- Today, we will begin exploring how identity is very unique to all of us, or is it? This is just one of the questions that we will ponder as we read a short story entitled, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* written by James Thurber and published in 1939. It is a story of a character who is constantly redefining who he is as a result of the events that occur in his life.

- Ask students to make notes on the graphic organizer, Handout: **Creating Reading Connections: *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty***.

**EXPLAIN**

- Everyone has personal strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes, these character traits are not obvious. Other times, a person may think he possesses a certain strength or weakness, when others would disagree.
- **When you meet someone for the first time, what do you notice or learn from them? Accept responses.**
- Things to look for in identifying character traits:
  - Physical traits
  - Behavior
  - Personality traits
  - Faults or Virtues
  - Background
  - Motivation (what drives them?)
- Think about what people would say about you. **What would they express as a strength or weakness in your character?**
- Continue listing strengths and weaknesses in the form of a T-chart on paper. Label the columns with Strengths and Weaknesses.
- As you looked at yourself and at your partner, you identified traits that can be either a strength or a weakness. When we begin reading the story, you

**Notes for Teacher****STATE RESOURCES:**

For scaffolding information in reading, check: Enhancing Reading Comprehension for Secondary Students at:

[http://www.texasreading.org/downloads/special\\_ed/SEDsecondaryoriginal/2000\\_enhance\\_read\\_2.SE.PDF](http://www.texasreading.org/downloads/special_ed/SEDsecondaryoriginal/2000_enhance_read_2.SE.PDF)

and for adjusting material to suit reading ability check Lexile Conversion Tables and Links at:

<http://www.tea.state.us/curriculum/elar/l/exile.html>

Review the graphic organizer on Handout: **Creating Reading Connections—*The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*** with the class, to prepare them for note taking during the reading of the story. Read the story aloud and ask students to follow along with you as it is important to model the reading process as well as how to analyze a story as the plot unfolds. Students will become more aware of what to look for as they begin to read analytically and critically on their own.

(Reading of the story will begin the first class period and will continue into the next class period.)

Suggested time: 1 Day

Give the students examples if they are having difficulty listing their strengths and weaknesses. Use words such as: adventurous, brave, creative, intelligent, lazy, happy, and enthusiastic.



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will do the same. Identify the character's traits and determine whether they are a strength or a weakness.

**ELABORATE**

- **Why** do characters respond to certain situations in the ways that they do?
    - What usually inspires you to do something that you wouldn't ordinarily think of doing---for, example, wearing a new hairstyle or buying a different brand of tennis shoes or jeans?
  - What do you think of when you hear the words, "role model"? *Accept responses and ask for and record examples*
  - How do role models impact the way you speak, dress, and act in front of others?
  - Do you believe that your identity is the result of your associations with other people? *Call on volunteers; list student responses on the board.*
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- Move into collaborative groups to continue our discussion.
  - Give students approximately 20 minutes to complete this assignment. It is important that the group Timekeepers keep track of the time allotted and that the Task Manager keeps the group focused on completing the assignment as listed on the two graphic organizers, entitled, Handout: **Creating a Character Web for the real Walter Mitty** and the **Creating a Character Web for the imaginary Walter Mitty**.
- Students, each collaborative group is to:
1. Discuss how the main character was influenced by the setting of the story as he interacted with his wife. Give examples of how the setting influenced Walter as he assumed the personalities of his imaginary characters.
  2. Create a character web of the character traits and attributes that significantly define the main character as he assumes the identities of his other imaginary personalities.
  3. Create another character web listing the character traits and attributes of the real Walter Mitty.
  4. Illustrate the real or imagined Walter Mitty using the art materials provided to your group.
- To close the lesson respond to these questions:
- **How are Walter Mitty's imaginary characters similar or different from his real personality? Why are these imaginary characters much like role models for Walter Mitty?**
  - **Can our fantasies lead us to who we really want to be?**

**EVALUATE**

**Select a personal role model, and write a personal narrative comparing your similarities and differences. (7B, 11E, 1A)**

1. Select one role model that you most admire or who has greatly influenced your life. Complete a Character Web listing those traits that have significantly motivated you to emulate or mimic this person. Please make sure that you have answered the following questions as you choose your role model's attributes.
  - What personal traits, characteristics, or attributes do you feel are most significant in the role model that you chose? Justify your answer, citing

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Have students share their T-charts with a partner. They can add or delete character traits when they consult with each other. Then, call on volunteers to share their T-chart.

List some of these role models, on the board. Lead class discussion about role models and how they impact the actions of others. **Guide students towards inductive identification of those attributes that characterize a role model.**

**MATERIALS:**

Handout: **Collaborative Team Planning Guide**. Review guidelines with students.

**MATERIALS:**

Handout: **Creating a Character Web/real Walter Mitty and Creating a Character Web/imaginary Walter Mitty**. Review directions.

Reporters are to report their findings to the class.

Ask for responses from the students or groups.

Suggested time: 1 Day

Follow these directions for having students work on the Performance Indicator.

**Instructional Procedures**

- specific reasons.
- How are you most like or unlike your role model?
2. Complete a Character Web describing the *real* you. Identify six traits that you believe define *you as a person today or the person you would like to become in the future*. Justify your choices in a short paragraph on the corresponding Handout: **Creating “Me” Today or Tomorrow**, Parts 1 and 2).
  3. On the Handout: **My Role Model and Me**, use the character webs that you have completed to compare the similarities and differences between your role and you in a brief paragraph.

**EXPLORE**

Write the following sentences on the board and ask:

What is wrong with these sentences? How would you fix them to make them clear?

1. Mom is a lawyer, but I know little about it.
2. When the ball hit the hoop, it bounced.
3. The chairperson told Maria that she would have to resign.

**EXPLAIN**

Pronouns stand in for nouns. When we use them properly, our readers understand what single noun the pronoun stands for. Every problem of pronoun reference upsets this clarity so that readers have problems deciding which of two or more earlier nouns a pronoun stands for. Sometimes, there is even difficulty in finding any noun at all. The noun the pronoun stands for is called its antecedent. In order to avoid ambiguous and vague references to antecedents, you must use pronouns properly.

**EVALUATE**

In a well-developed paragraph, respond to one of the three journal prompts listed on the board. Support your position citing examples from your own personal experiences, beliefs, and attitudes.

Prompts:

- Can personal experiences create both heroes and villains? Why or why not?
- Does listening to others' personal experiences change your perception of them?

Underline all of the pronouns and indicate their antecedents in the paragraph you have written.

**Notes for Teacher****MATERIALS:**

Review the directions on the following resources with the students:

- Handout: **Character Web**
- Handout: **Creating “Me” Today or Tomorrow, Parts 1 and 2)**
- Handout: **My Role Model and Me**
- Handout: **Writing Conventions**

Have the students copy the sentences or call on students to read the sentences aloud.

Ask the students to fix the sentences in order to make them clear. If they are having difficulty, use the following questions to elicit responses:

**What do you know little about? Mom being a lawyer or about the profession?**

**What bounced? The ball or the hoop?**

**Who would have to resign? The chairperson or Maria?**

Have the students work on the Handout: **Reference of Pronouns to Antecedents**.

Go over the sentences with the students in order to check for understanding.

Use the prompts listed, or create similar questions to encourage introspective thought. The prompts are intended to be provocative guiding questions designed to elicit varied responses, supported by examples from the students' personal experiences. Refer to the attachment, *Writing Conventions*, to assist students in the writing development of their paragraphs.

Make sure students have completed their paragraphs before you have them go back and identify the pronouns and antecedents. You can have the students check their own paragraphs or have

## **VITA**

Susan Michelle Tyrrell received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of Texas at Tyler in August 1997. She went on to earn her Master of Arts in English at Texas A&M University in Commerce in August 2000. She entered the doctoral program in Educational Psychology at Texas A&M in the summer of 2007 after teaching for eight years in Texas public schools and graduated with her Ph.D. in August 2010. Her research interests include, curriculum, gifted education, social and emotional development in gifted students, language arts education and teacher education.

Dr. Tyrrell may be reached at: 4545 Rainbow Drive, Rainbow City, AL 35906.  
She may be reached through email at: RealityWrites@gmail.com.